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THE JOURNEY OF LIFE

W. J. Knorr

PREACHERS OF THE AGE




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Preachers of the Age

CANON KNOX LITTLE



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*Yours, With kindest thoughts,
W. J. Knox Little.*

From a photograph by Samuel A. Walker

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THE JOURNEY OF LIFE

BY

W. J. KNOX LITTLE, M.A.

CANON OF WORCESTER

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TO MRS. FITZGERALD, OF SHALSTON
MANOR.

MY DEAR OLD FRIEND,

You will allow me, I hope—although I have not asked your permission—to add an interest to this little book, which otherwise it would want, at least to me, by connecting it with your name.

It has no pretension to be an exhaustive treatise on the solemn subject suggested by its title. The only excuse, indeed, for giving it such a title is that *that* thread of thought ran through all the sermons of which it is composed.

These sermons have been preached in various places, and on various occasions. They cannot aspire to any originality or special interest. They have been collected, as well as I could manage, for publication in obedience to a request which seemed to me to deserve attention.

I think some of them, at any rate, will interest you. I am sure, for my sake, you will receive them kindly. It is not possible to make due acknowledgments to *every one* from whom one learns something—especially the great teachers of the past—but you will notice here and there how often I am haunted by the words of two great teachers, now, alas! gone from us—the late Dean of S. Paul's, and him with whom you, I know, enjoyed such a close and lasting friendship—Robert Browning. You will not like my little book the less for this.

It would be presumptuous in me to imagine that I could teach you anything on the solemn subject of this volume which you, my dear old friend, have not, in your long, long journey of life, learnt long ago from better men; but I hope that now, in your declining years, my little offering may give you pleasure, as an acknowledgment of many kindnesses you have shown to me and mine in sunny days now gone; and that some words, in even so slender a work as this, may help to cheer and console you as the shadows of life's evening are gathering, and to support you with the thought of "the rest that remaineth" when the journey is over, in the land where "they shall not sorrow any more at all."

Ever your affectionate old friend,

W. J. KNOX LITTLE.

HOAR CROSS,
March 27, 1892.

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THE CARDINAL VIRTUES.

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THE STANDARD OF EFFORT.

SERMON I.

THE STANDARD OF EFFORT.

“We . . . do not cease to desire . . . that ye might walk worthy of the Lord.”—COL. i. 10.

RELIGION has many aspects. Its atmosphere varies. Its colour changes. It falls in, in many ways, with the moods of Nature, and with the moods of man. Sometimes it appears to us all sunshine, sometimes little else than cloud. But indeed—like human life, of which it is the only real philosophy—the dusk and the sunshine are intermingled, and in it, if there is a breadth of untroubled heaven, there is sure to follow the shadow of the clouds.

Besides, then, the definite and exact teachings which come from the Catholic Faith at special times—in Advent or in Lent or Eastertide—*now*¹ the mind is turned to wider views and the more general aspect of our religion; and if we dwell, in the main, on some *one* aspect, if we examine it for the moment from some *one* point of view, we shall not be disloyal to the spirit of the Church, and, with God’s blessing, we shall not be wasting our time.

¹ Preached in the Trinity season.

I.

There are before man two solemn certainties—life and death. On death, in spite of all its unapproachable seriousness and its unrelenting rigour, we may exercise an influence, but this can be done only through our dealings with life. As we live, so, on the whole, we shall die. To die well we must live well. It is on the conduct of life that the character of death will depend.

To think deeply and carefully how best to deal with life, is, then, of the last importance. It may be looked at from many points of view; it may be illuminated by different lights; it may be realized in its importance under many figures. There is one often before the religious mind which may help us to think worthily of our duty. Life is a journey.

Holy Scripture is, as we know, full of this feeling as to life. Abraham's servant looks upon the plan which he has formed for obtaining the hand of Rebekah as "the way he shall go;" the Israelites in the wilderness are constantly reminded of "the way" the Lord leads them, not evidently in reference to the mere earthly journey, but the whole providential guidance and progress of their destiny; Solomon prays for his people that God "should teach them the good way wherein they should walk;" the object of Ezra's fast by "the river that runneth to Ahava" is to seek "a right way" from God; Job has confidence that God knows his "way," and tries him in it; and the Psalms are full from end to end with the constant prayer that life may be "a way of truth," and constant warning of the danger of an "evil way." "The "way of holiness," the "way of uprightness," the "way of peace," are constant expressions

in the Prophets for lives guided by religious principle. In the New Testament even more distinct is this feeling as to life. Our Lord's "narrow way" and "broad way" bring out in the most definite form the contrast, and His statement that He is "the Way" brings out the guidance of a holy as opposed to a godless life.

So it has been in later religious histories. Men who have taken the widest and most serious view of the "changes and chances" of human probation have ever been led to think of it as a journey. The great Puritan allegory, the "Pilgrim's Progress," is one of the most striking instances; another and more moving is the "Divina Commedia." "The 'Commedia,'" says a competent authority,¹ "at the first glance, shows the traces of its author's life. It is the work of a wanderer. The very form in which it is told is that of a journey, difficult, toilsome, perilous, and full of change. It is more than a working out of that touching phraseology of the Middle Ages, in which 'the way' was the technical theological expression for this mortal life; and *viator* meant man in his state of trial, as *comprehensor* meant man made perfect, having attained to his heavenly country." In Dante it is, doubtless, more than this, but it *is* this. Deeply has sunk into the minds of men the thought that life is a journey.

II.

Of course, this is so from the mere sense of the advance of years. Time goes on, year follows year, and in each, man has a sense that there is a fresh turn in his path, a new reach of road. But further upon that road are gathered

¹ Dean Church.

vast funds of accumulated experience. That road may, we feel, be travelled wisely and well, or many turns may be taken and precious opportunities may be wasted, and though errors may be, in a measure, corrected, yet the sad thing is that never *entirely* can we retrace our steps. The journey *must* go on, but the *character* of our advance depends upon ourselves. It is natural, then, and right that the great Apostle, with the real yearnings of a father's heart, should pray that the conduct of life should not be careless; that the onward march should not be haphazard; that the journey, in fact, should not be at random; that there should be effort, honest, unflagging; that there should be a standard by which effort should be measured; that "the walk" should be "worthy of the Lord."

" Shall life go wandering on its way
With no clear thought of where we tend,
Like wind-driven leaf or storm-swept spray,
And yet to end, so soon to end?"

III.

Where, then, is effort required in the journey of life, so that "the walk" may be "worthy of the Lord"? Well, unquestionably a living human being must be subject to the law of development. Development, as we know, may be guided aright or allowed to go wrong. To see to it that the development is in the true lines of real religious progress will be one way, and the chief way, of walking "worthy of the Lord."

There is, for example, the development of the mind, the understanding. This can develop rightly only by being brought in contact with truth. Here, of course, is a work for the educator. Here is much to be done which rests

more on the responsibility of others, than on that of the subject of the process. Education is, and justly, one of the governing thoughts of the day. There are men among us of keen intelligence and determined purpose who look upon it as the great leverage for destroying Christianity. There are others, who ought to know better; who, though departing from the ordering of His Church which was left to us by our Blessed Lord, still name His name and profess a certain allegiance to at least a part of His teaching—and yet allow themselves, perhaps from misunderstanding the issues, perhaps from ecclesiastical jealousy, to take sides with that maimed system, insulting to human nature, and, at best, insufficient for our needs, which is called Secularism.

The child, early in his journey of life, must indeed have his understanding developed. Understanding is the foundation-stone of character. But to develop understanding by “useful knowledge” alone is like sending a man on a long expedition of discovery, with only an ordnance survey map of the first few miles, to guide to the close of his journey. A religious school, or a religious home, will take care that knowledge, so far as it can be had, shall be supplied, but never without the thought of the highest knowledge, never without a serious consciousness that no mental development is worth the name unless it is in accordance with the deep truth which touches man’s inner self—truth as to God and His relation to all the facts of man’s life and his pronounced interest in the fields of science or the fields of history.

It is true, indeed, that while we are thankful for all opportunities of knowledge (so abundant in these times), we must resist, as a matter of loyalty to human nature, not to say to God, all the efforts to separate this from deep

religious truth, which gives it meaning; but there is something more.

The human being passes from the hands of the school teacher, the parent, the school board, the clergyman—he is out on his toil of life. There is still the journey of life; still the development of the mind. How much now depends upon fixing the intelligence with deliberate effect upon what is good, noble, worth our regard! Can we strive, can we pray too earnestly, that here the soul may “walk worthy of the Lord”? Life is short; our opportunities are not unlimited. We have to choose among many subjects for thought; we have to select our books. Think of the vast volume of useless or pernicious thought ever flowing from the press! Think of the rush of life, of the little time for reading or thinking for the vast mass of men! Must not the Church be awake and earnest—not to fall in too much, as she is too given to do, into the newspaper craze of the age, but to urge on her children the solemn responsibility of choosing their reading, the necessity of allowing the mind to dwell on noble thoughts, the restraining to worthy subjects the stray meditations of leisure hours, the vigorous effort to look steadily at truth and to measure things by an eternal standard, if, indeed, the intelligence is to be rightly developed, if indeed, in mind and thought, they are to advance on the true path of progress, if they are to “walk worthy of God”?

IV.

And then there is the development of the affections and of the will. Onward they go. Year by year these parts of our wonderful complex nature make fresh advances in some

direction. They cannot stand still. Think, for instance, of that vast fount of love which lies, often buried, in every human heart. Nothing determines the direction of life so much as the purification and wise direction of this. Early in life, if a home be good, and conditions are favourable, we know what valuable lessons in sincere affection are learnt, which after life can never efface. To love nobly, to love well, to fix the love of the heart upon objects really worthy of our regard, is to purify, exalt, and ennoble character; it is indeed to learn to "walk worthy." There may be—as we know, alas!—much in early life to hinder rather than help a true development of the affections. Well, to correct that calamity is a work for the Church and for the people of God. It is no mere metaphor, it is no mere phrase of religious conventionality, to talk of "the love of Jesus." The Christian religion furnishes us all with the splendid picture of a true attraction, a really noble life. Apart from the motives of gratitude to our Redeemer which are sure to be roused in an instructed Christian, as he realizes his sins and knows his need of a Saviour, it is Christianity, and it alone, which in every department of its activity, in its art, its theology, its literature, its instruction, its devotional exercises, presents to the human affection a really worthy object—a man of human life most lovely, and at this moment yearning for the affection of every human heart which needs a noble object and an unfailing stay. It is possible, by Divine grace, for a very serious and balanced affection to develop under Christian influences and teachings, and through concrete example placed before it on lower levels, but still true to Christian principle, until it clasps with a true realization and a living energy, the nobler character and the unchanging goodness of Jesus Christ.

V.

And along with the development of mind and affection there goes, there must go, the unfolding of the force of the will. It is this which crowns the character. Certainly, as in other things so in this, men are born in very different conditions. Some are handicapped in the struggle of life by a will naturally enfeebled. It is useless to inquire into the mystery of heredity. We know that by the law of solidarity of the human family sins of fathers are visited on children, and it is useless to plunge into unfathomable mysteries, it is worse than folly to quarrel with unchanging fact. Yes, some are handicapped in the walk of life in this as in other things. But no man is the mere sport of destiny. In some it may require more courage and sterner effort to remedy defects or correct difficulties than in others, but it is a part of the teaching of Christianity that the doctrine of irremediable destiny, like the doctrine of indefectible grace, is false, and that every one of us, if we will, can have power to correct faults.

It is indeed difficult for us English people to grasp this truth. We are a self-reliant people. We are more than semi-Pelagian. We think *all* depends on influence and effort. We are apt to submit to a sort of ingrained materialism. We scarcely believe in the grace of God. The most wonderful illustration of this is to be found in the hesitation, so long prevalent, to believe in the plainly scriptural truth of regeneration in Holy Baptism. It was said to be in the interests of "Free Grace," but in fact the plain words of Scripture and the witness of the Church from the first were denied, because the English temper finds it difficult to believe in a force so intangible,

so impossible to measure by merely materialistic standards, as the grace of God. The weakest will may be strengthened by grace. The power of the will may be developed in a right direction by discipline. By disciplined obedience, in little things, to the calls of duty and the claims of the Church, the will grows strong for good. To develop the understanding by truth, the affection by eternal beauty, the will by the discipline of obedience made possible by the grace of God;—this is to be advancing on the path of a heavenward progress; this is to be making life's journey what it should be; this is to be "walking worthy of God."

VI.

The journey of life! Ah! here before us rise all sorts of strange spectres, dim forms, flitting visions. It is easy, you say, to map out the interior constitution of man, and then to say such and such should be his action accordingly; but think of the variety of character, think of the diversity of nature, think of the divergence of circumstance. How can there be, in this startling scene of confused probation, an opportunity for a worthy walk?

It is true. The spectacle of human life is soul-subduing. So much that is beautiful, so much that is base! So many instances of fair hopes dashed with disappointment, and bright mornings ending only in a night of storm!

Still everywhere and always there are laws which govern human nature; laws, too, which ought to be, which may be, applied by the Christian Church.

Human nature itself, apart from the teachings of Christianity, cries out for a final object, for an "end" for man. More and more do we learn that there is a "unity in nature,"

that there is a harmony in things. Everything has its end, towards which it reaches out. Final causes are everywhere an observed law. And man, who can consciously and with choice travel along the path of his pilgrimage, is he to be the exception to the laws of the universe? And if he is not to be the exception, then for the journey of life there must be a standard for effort, an end towards which to reach, an object to make for, and a governing principle by which supremely to be guided,—come what may.

VII.

Brethren, that end is—God. This, man has felt even amidst his deepest mistakes. There is no credulity like the credulity of scepticism. Once man allows himself in any way to deny God, he is the victim to a thousand forms of fancy. Materialism, pantheism, positivism, agnosticism—we are familiar with numberless terms for these varying forms of credulity. They are alike in this, that they witness to the uneasy sense of the soul when it tries to account for itself and its yearnings away from the one rational explanation of them—God.

Human reason demands for its rest the final and essential Truth. Short of that it cannot rest. It may try to console itself with a lazy assertion that, if there be such, it cannot be known, and a bald attempt to limit its efforts to things of sense, or a denial of its own unchangeable sense of personal being; but it will not do. The sense that each one has that he himself is *a cause*; the sense of a single personal life, the “obstinate questionings” of the outward world in its varied facts, and the not less real facts of consciousness, drive man—if he will not perform intellectual

suicide, if he will not play the traitor to the ascertained certainties of his own being—drive him to the final Cause, the last and all-comprehending Truth, drive him to God.

It is the same with conscience. Whatever account he may choose to give of it, however he may theorize over inherited experience, still sooner or later there is a voice that speaks—speaks, too, not as merely part of himself, but standing apart and judging his action and motive; speaks not as a subordinate or as a mere possession; speaks with *authority*. He may, if he pleases, try to rest on a moral *law*, but right reason, and the voice he needs must listen to, assert a *lawgiver*.

Nor do his affections quietly permit him to be easily the victim of sceptical credulity. He is ever attracted by beauty. Every form of beauty, natural, physical, intellectual, æsthetic, is only—and he knows it—a whisper and symbol of that moral and spiritual beauty which is the only possible satisfaction of his higher self. His affections are always witnessing to the need, the incorrigible longing of the human heart to rest in the highest good. And, more, that rest never can be found unless that good is in the form of personal life. The heart needs a person. Victim of change, it longs for the unchangeable; sport of delusion, it yearns for the entirely true; toy of deceptive pretences, it seeks the perfectly loving—it calls for God.

And then, again, how impossible it is, for the most self-reliant even, not to be conscious of his finite limitations, of his dependence, of his weakness, his imperfection; yet, side by side with such saddening consciousness, there are mysterious ideas haunting the chamber of the soul. They may terrify, or they may excite admiration. They may flit past for a moment,

like dimly discerned presences in the twilight, but they cannot be banished. There they are. The idea of the perfect, the absolute, the infinite—how came he by them, if they represent no fact of first importance? Why *will* they haunt him, generation after generation, and age after age? All brains cannot be hopelessly diseased. These are not phantoms, these are facts. They point to God!

VIII.

It is no mere doctrine of Christianity that we are a fallen race. No. It is an evident and a saddening fact. And one of the saddest results of the fall is the tendency to superstition in the soul of wrecked and ruined man. Once superstition took the form of worship of a fantastic multitude of unseen beings; once again, material things—formed in shapes grotesque or beautiful—enchained the attention of many men. Old sins recur, old faults have an inveterate tendency to reappear, but now with changed names. We have banished the “gods of wood and stone,” but we have our materialists worshipping motion and matter. “The oracles are dumb,” but we have our *theosophies* and *spiritualisms* supplying their place. The human heroes and demi-gods have long been banished, but we have our worshippers of “humanity,” either offering up their devotions to an unsubstantial generalization, or to a concrete whole in which the evil, to speak restrainedly, is not found in less measure than the good!

Every wild aberration in modern as in ancient superstition, in the superstition of science as in the superstition of pagan thought, is at least a witness to the fact that man's end and rest and satisfaction can only be found in the living God.

"Look to the end!" God is the end of man, and the journey of life, to be nobly travelled, to be fruitful in well-used opportunity, to lead at last to the final satisfaction of man's higher nature, must be travelled with an increasing consciousness of the end of all human life and activity, and a deepening devotion to the object before us all. The standard of effort in life's journey is God. "Walk worthy of the Lord."

IX.

Brethren, it is the glory of Christianity that *this* it has kept before its children with unflinching persistence. It has done so at least in three ways.

(1) It has never been the way of the Catholic Church, indeed, to commit herself to what may perhaps be called, without offence, the *sourness* of Puritanism. She *has* taught a severe discipline in many things, if the soul is to pass unscathed through the dangers of its earthly probation, but she has also recognized with generous truthfulness the abundance of God's gifts in subjects not strictly religious. "Every good gift and every perfect gift," the Church has felt with S. James, "is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights, with Whom is no variable-ness, neither shadow of turning." She has felt that God has given wonderful gifts to man, varying in different ages in form and feature, useful for this passing life. She has learnt that there are large results of civilization, not always created by herself, but such that she has been bound to recognize them, or enfold them in her system, or cover with her approval, or—if they have been ruined or injured—to restore.¹

¹ See, for example, this truth worked out fully, in his own masterly way, by the late Dean Church, in his "Gifts of Civilization."

She has lived, in our own times, into an age of science or commercial enterprise or political life, unlike all ages before. She sees that men, that Christian men, *must* take an interest in these things. She has not despised them ; she has felt their power and majesty, if she has not closed her eyes to their danger. She has seen defects, she has not closed her eyes to blemishes, and she has insisted on mistakes. Still she has seen God's providential work in it all ; and commerce, and politics, and literature, and art, and even war, she has either taken into her service or endeavoured to consecrate to her Master's use. And yet, amidst the dazzling spectacle, and in the midst of the deafening clamour, her songs of praise, her confessions of sin, her warnings of danger, her celebration of mysterious sacraments or exhortations to penitence, and her whispers of peace, have gone on and will not be silenced, saying in effect to the busiest, to the humblest, to the wisest, to the most gifted, "Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God." "What shall it profit, if a man gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

(2) And the Catholic Church has kept man's end before him, by her reiterated teaching of the beauty of holiness and the seriousness of sin. She, of all forms of Christianity, is marked by this, as it has been truly observed¹—she will have even the saint upon his knees. No doctrine of assurance and safety, no teaching of indefectible grace, no recognition of the blessed truth of "peace with God," can ever betray her into allowing even the most advanced and most truly Christian to forget the infinite chasm which is between the creature and the Creator, the shadowy character of the highest human goodness compared with the perfect moral beauty—God.

¹ Somewhere by the late Cardinal Newman.

Amidst all discoveries of human genius, amidst all inventions of human ingenuity, she calls men back to think that sin is the crowning calamity ; that holiness is the most glorious achievement ; that all that hinders, as all that helps man to his end, is beyond all things to command his attention ; for he is an immortal, and his end is God.

(3) And the Church keeps man's end before him by keeping high before the eye of her children—Jesus Christ. Once only has the world seen God in human form. But that human life that was lived nineteen centuries ago in conditions so humble, so unexpected, is a life *in* the Church now. The Church is "the body of Christ." Christ is the manifestation of the Father. To lead the journey of life in a manner loyal to the Church's teachings is to be *in* the life of the Incarnate, under the spell of His matchless teaching, face to face with His sublime example ; it is to keep before the soul—as it is most possible for the soul to grasp it—the life of God.

X.

"Walk worthy of the Lord." Yes, if the journey of life is to be what it may be, what it ought to be, amidst all the distractions of business, the calls of pleasure, the oppressions of sorrow, the burdens of care, then in these has it to learn to keep its end before it—to keep God.

And if so, what is the governing *principle* which underlies all human effort directed towards God ? On this the Christian religion is clear. That principle is *faith*. To "walk by sight" is the mark of the children of this world ; to "walk by faith" is the characteristic of the children of God. When men are tempted to unbelief ; when the clouds of doubt have blackened all their heavens, or the frost of

scepticism has chilled them to the bone, the demand is made upon the Christian for *sensible demonstration* of the truths of a system which belongs to the *spiritual life* ! Strange delusion ! The Founder of Christianity has forewarned His people that "he that willeth to do His will, shall know ;" that faith—which is not fancy, nor dream, nor imagination, in that these deal with unrealities, and not with facts—is nothing less than the eyesight of the soul ; that it implies an effort, that it is a moral act, and has as much or more to do with the will than it has with the apprehensive understanding ; that—given as it is in germ by the regenerating Spirit in Holy Baptism—it grows and increases in power by loving exercise, in obedience, in meditation, in prayer. Thus it becomes its own evidence that it is the "substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen ;" that it lies at the root of all religious growth, and is the germ of all religious energy. If the journey is to be worthy, "without faith it is impossible to please Him ;" and we must "walk by faith" if God is indeed to be the end we look to in our pilgrim path, if indeed we are to "walk worthy of the Lord."

XI.

Ah ! indeed we are travellers, each of us, advancing on a mysterious journey, a journey which each of us can travel once and no more. Doubtless it has been before now, doubtless it will be again, full of startling turns and unexpected vicissitudes. Some who were our companions have parted from us, separated by circumstance, by opinion, by misconception, by distance, by death, but the soul is advancing still on its lonely path of added experience, with chequered lights and darkness, of sorrow or of hope. Still

we are here, each of us, with our personal progress to be made, with our special opportunities, with our individual trials. With gifts to use and sins to conquer, with graces to store in the soul's recesses and virtues to make our own in the efforts of duty, with joys to rejoice in, with self-denial to practise, with others to succour and others to love, our journey is going onward in this strange scene of our probation, and before us, coming nearer, "the valley of the shadow."

Changes we must be prepared for, and we must not grow morbid. Nothing can "continue" with us "in one stay." History shows us the futile efforts to resist the unrelenting power of change. Rising, passing, falling, such is human life. We feel at times like phantoms flitting across the stage, only the work is very real, and the pain and gladness are alike felt, and go deep into the soul. We may try to cheat ourselves into forgetfulness, or deceive ourselves into a happy dream. It will not do. Onward life goes. We have had to abandon cherished ambitions; we have been forced to surrender hopes clung to long and passionately; we have had to feel the desperate sorrow of human love, as well as its delirious joy. Death has swept past us, and swept with it the band of figures that were familiar. Circumstance has separated us from hearts whose throb made ours throb quicker with a noble love. Work has shaped itself for us into unexpected forms, and when we seemed to be free, suddenly we have found our hopes bound by unimagined duties. Ideals have risen up, then faded into unsubstantial shadow; the pathetic splendour of the dawn above the autumn forest has not been soft and sad enough in symbolism to show the change of our opening and our onward day. We once heard of the changing world, and its pathos

to us was poetry, and its story a touching tale. Now we *know* it. It has touched ourselves. We are really on a journey, and the afternoon is deepening and the shadows of the evening beginning to lengthen, and we are conscious, all too severely, of the nearness of the night. How shall we meet it? How shall we deal with the burden of past experiences, and look with strength and courage into the unknown possibilities of the future? In what temper shall we stand against the seductions of sadness and the spectral phantoms of doubt? Shall we submit with a fatalistic *Kismet*, and bear the inevitable as best we may? Shall we gaze with petulance, or arrogance, or vexation on the river around us, or on the river within? Shall we be cynics and scornful, when life shows itself so full of sorrow, so rich in mistake and trouble, in disaster, in degeneracy, in decay? No, surely! Life's journey has a guiding principle. Triumphant faith grows clearer and more buoyant to those who by *that* light are guiding their journey.

“Grow old along with me!

The best is yet to be—

The last of life, for which the first was made:

Our times are in His hand

Who saith, ‘A whole I planned,

Youth shows but half; trust God: see all, nor be afraid.’”

Faith grows clearer to those who seek Him as the journey goes on. It is faith which gives vigour and nobility to effort, because it keeps before the soul the great things yet to be. It encourages to the effort to *realize* the passing character of all that is, in its present condition, but the everlasting character of all that is godlike and heavenly—of duty nobly done, of sorrow bravely borne, of work energetically carried out, of self-seeking crushed and self-

sacrifice endured, and gentleness, and courage, and penitence, and peace, and self-denying love.

It is *that* principle which will enable us to "walk worthy," because by it we walk as men should who "seek a country."

Ah! above all to keep before us the end; to know, to realize, to feel, that no gain in the world, no satisfaction of earthly ambition, no delight in personal pleasure, no achievement of temporary successes, can be anything but disastrous failure if for such things we give up God,—this is to "walk worthy." Yes, in all the joys and sorrows of life, in every success as in every failure, in the moments of happiness with those we love, in the moments of parting when our hearts are full of tears—still everywhere and always onward the soul is going with a "worthy walk" on the path of its pilgrimage, if it lose not sight of its supreme end—God, the Good, the Beautiful, the Loving, the True.

May He give us grace, as life's day gathers its increasing shadow, to hear the "songs in the night," to have only clearer visions of the great realities on which faith is gazing, to have an ever deeper, truer longing—"My soul is athirst for God, for the living God; when shall I come to appear before the presence of God?"

THE STRUGGLE FOR THE
RIGHT.

SERMON II.

THE STRUGGLE FOR THE RIGHT.

“Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue.”—2 PET. i. 5.

THE journey of life has to be travelled by us all. It must be made, whether shorter or longer between the cradle and the grave, and *the* point of consequence is to make it well.

In that journey,—as it is considered, in the case of God’s children, of those who by Baptism have been adopted into His special family,—we know that the soul has in it, in germ, the gift of faith, and the Church, the Divine Teacher insists, and Holy Scripture supports her contention, that faith must be the fundamental principle of a well-made journey; that in the rough road of life, if we are to walk as becomes a Christian, we must “walk by faith, and not by sight.”

I.

And now a question arises of gravest importance. What are the *first* efforts needed in the journey of life?

The way of life, we know from the experience of the saints, if not from our own, from the teaching of Christ, if not from the whisper of our own souls, has many difficulties.

It is like climbing the lofty mountain range, when the crest, indeed, is white with glittering crystals, and the shining pinacles take the sunlight at the breaking of the dawn ; but to reach the crest there is a long and laborious struggle, there are intervening ridges sharp and craggy, there are rough stones which hurt the feet, there are deep gullies where the water pours in angry torrents, and exposed unsheltered platforms swept by the multitudinous legions of the un pitying winds. Clearly have we to fix it in our minds for sake of others, if not for ourselves, that if such an ascent is truly to be achieved, the first steps must be planted well.

Brethren, to advance as we should advance in a Christian's journey, we must early learn the importance of *the moral life* ; we must surely grasp the serious meanings of *right and wrong*.

II.

What is the value, what the safeguard, of the moral law ? Well, here it is not necessary to deny that the moral law is not a revelation of Christianity. The moral law, indeed, is something older than the Christian revelation ; it comes from the absolute life, from the very Being, of God, and is written in the heart of man. Mathematical law is the law of necessity, relating to matter and motion in a world of physical and material creations. It cannot be disobeyed. "Thou hast given them a law which shall not be broken," is the law of mathematical necessity. Moral law is the law of liberty, belonging to conscious and self-determining man. It may be disregarded or set at defiance, for the subjects to it are free ; but to disregard or set it at defiance is as sure to entail injury or ruin, as a wild rush of some

heavenly body unrestrained by the laws which govern its motion, carrying with it devastation and the breaking up of worlds. The one law is of physical necessity, the other law may be freely obeyed or freely set at defiance; but both belong to the nature of things—come from the Absolute, and are of Eternity.

And more, as naturally as the ray of light examined or dissected by the use of the solar spectrum leads to a knowledge of the material of the sun, so the moral law leads the soul to God. It bears a testimony which *will* not be silenced—to eternal things. It insists on certain needs of our very nature, and in so doing turns the being of man towards the sense of the one Cause behind all causes, the final satisfaction of the cravings of the soul. The very sense that we are “obliged” turns our mind to ask, “Obliged” by what? The fact that we “*ought*” insists on our asking, To whom do we “owe” it? The thought of duty calls for our answer, To whom is it “due”? The moral law *implies* a moral lawgiver. Our moral nature is ever pointing towards the “highest” and the “best,” and these insensibly lift us to the thought of an order of things above the level of lower nature. We cannot shut out the dream of the ideal. We cannot, in a world where there is so much untruth, impurity, injustice, cruelty, scorn escape from the loving and belief in pure Truth, entire Purity, absolute Righteousness, perfect Love, to redress the balance. Wide and far, in spite of all theories to the contrary, the moral law, written in more or less legible character in the heart of man, has borne its witness to the living God.

Yes, if it were possible for the Christian revelation to vanish, moral truths are of the nature of things, are from

eternity and to eternity, can by no possibility perish, are "words of God which live and abide for ever." The Second Person of the Ever-Blessed Trinity is the Eternal Logos, the Eternal Reason; and He, the "Light that lighteneth every man that cometh into the world," has written the moral law in the reason of man—which is the image of Himself.

"God's commandments are not grievous;" they do not come from arbitrary enactment or passing caprice. They are of God's very nature. The moral law is the very condition of His Being. To state it is to state what *is*. This is true. But it is also true that it has been the work of Christ and His Church to throw life and light into the moral law, to enforce its teaching, to assist in its application, to secure its full recognition in a way not possible except for religion. The Christian religion has revealed the personal life and love of Him Who is the Source of moral truth. It has shown us the moral law in its complete earthly relation in the perfect example of the life of Jesus Christ. It has helped us to realize its splendour and our own weakness in attaining to its fulness; our need, therefore, of help, and our duty of high aspiration. It has made it vivid, living, sacred, near. It has re-enforced motives, and revealed strong sanctions, so that, without it, the moral law would have less power of influence, without "faith" there would be a weakness of "virtue;" but it has insisted that "faith" was given in germ to the regenerate soul. One of the earliest efforts of the soul on its journey is a deeper sense of the greatness, the eternity, the claim, of the moral law; one of the first nearer steps is to make *virtue* a reality alongside faith.

III.

Doubtless it is necessary to insist on this, for on the one hand it is a stumbling-block in the way of many to see men professing strictly to hold the Christian creed, and speaking lightly of what has been called "mere morality." Or, again, it has been perplexing to see men of—as far as man can judge—pure life and high character who spend the forces God has given them in attacking the Christian religion.

Yes! there are "religious" men who are not "good," and there are "good" men who are not "religious." But they each only illustrate the contention of the text. "Religious" men have to learn that to hold the "faith of the Lord of glory" ought to imply that real *love* which is *the* moral temper, which is *the* fulfilling of the Law, and that without that they are "nothing." And the "good" men who are assailing Christianity have to be reminded that they have grown up in the moral atmosphere made so clear and pure by the gospel, that much of the clear moral view and high moral principle possessed by them, they owe in fact to that mother whom they so wantonly insult, and that they are failing in that very morality of which they make so much if they forget that our responsibility is a grave one as to which way we willingly turn our mind in matters of religion; that we have and must have a responsibility for our belief.

IV.

"Add to your faith virtue." There is quite other advice abroad from the teachers of the hour, who have turned with scorn upon the Christian Faith. "Abandon faith altogether," they say in effect, and treat morality as it

is, as a matter of convenience realized by experience, and having its root in nothing eternal, but only in materialistic fact.

According to these loud and self-asserting teachers, the basis of all things is matter; the two interesting creations in the world are matter and force. Consciousness only depends on the movements of atoms of matter. Thought is phosphorus. Man, in a word, is the most unfortunate of animals. He is really a creature who ought to be ruled only by instincts; but he is less loyal to them than the lower creatures. He really has no true ground for imagining a future, but he is haunted by the imagination; he has flights of thought, and passionate love, and heart-breaking sorrow, and yet he is but a wretched specimen of sublimated matter, and his end is in the grave.

This teaching, insulting to common sense, insulting to humanity, destructive of everything noble and glorious in man, is "in the air." The scientists and positivists have been making it popular as much as in them lies; it is the horrid creed of that system of hatred to Christianity which is known on the Continent as "the Revolution." It makes a clean sweep of faith—and faith, be it remembered, is the real spring of self-sacrificing effort. But it also makes short work of morality. "Virtue," indeed, in a sense, may exist under the teaching of this materialistic morality, but it is only the virtue which puts limits upon self-indulgence in the interest of a far-seeing expediency; it is only the morality which acts as a social police.

How *this* abandonment of Christian morality must lower the nature and degrade the soul is evident enough if we think, by the way, of the teachings of those preachers of materialism on two subjects of first concern to us all.

(1) There is the effort—too successful in some quarters—to banish altogether from the *education* of the young everything except what is called “useful knowledge.” The young of this country—such is the effort of some—are to be taught simply what will be likely to help them in “making their way in the world.” This, it is obvious, is one-sided in a fatal sense. It neglects the real and immortal being, does not attempt to do all it can for the living soul, and only seeks to store the mind, and to store it, too, with a supply insufficient in quantity, unsuitable in quality, for its long life beyond the grave. The object of such education, even intellectually, is narrow; it only aims at supplying what is “useful” for a very small part of life. But in moral truth—which is the matter before us—it practically treats a boy as a highly organized brute. “If,” it has been justly said, “it is tolerably consistent, it abstains from all interference except so far as the law of the land or the law of conventional standards may oblige it, and allows a boy to take care of himself.” The heart and will need training as well as the intellect, and this immoral morality abandons both.

(2) Still more evident is its destructive tendency on the serious question of *marriage*.

Practically it is for making marriage a mere civil contract, which can be ended according to the exigencies of human caprice. The more “advanced thinkers” are for the abolition of marriage in any sense in which it can be understood by a Christian. “Marriage according to the truth of nature,”—the new name for licentiousness,—is to take the place of Holy Matrimony. With this will vanish a high ideal of womanhood, the serious sense of the duty and responsibility of parents and children, a noble and lofty

ideal of human love, and all that group of happy and blessed facts and relations which are summed up in the one word "home."

Awful, very awful it is, when any single soul disregards with a high hand the moral obligations which have their roots in eternity! More terrible still if a community, still more or less professedly Christian, plays fast and loose with these obligations! We live in days, brethren, when this is a not very distant danger. Moral scepticism is now encouraged. Great teachers preach a "word" of materialism. Secularism is attacking the fortress of religious education, and the abominations of the divorce court are a first instalment of the abolition of the old Christian morality of marriage gained by those to whom the moral law and the Christian religion are alike distasteful. All the more reason for every Christian in his own time of probation, all the more reason for every Christian who can help to equip the young in their journey of life, to remember the need of the moral ideal, the need of loyalty to moral truth as a part of Christian training. "Add to your faith virtue."

V.

"Add to your faith virtue!" Ah! we may leave with sorrow, with mourning, with warning, the debased teaching of those who have never known or who are despising or neglecting the Christian Faith. We have the consolation with regard to many of them that men are often better than their words; we are thankful to believe that, speaking lightly or angrily of Christianity, they yet owe it more than they think for. But, leaving them and their teachings, it is well for us to emphasize the early important steps which ought to be taken in the soul's journey of life.

Say what men may to the contrary, there is one thing that we are conscious of possessing, and that is liberty. There are, indeed, modern theories of materialistic unbelief which deny this proposition ; but we need not pause upon them now. They will not bear examination. They have no real philosophic basis. Man possesses moral freedom. He can choose. Undoubtedly this freedom is conditioned very variously in different men. Some, we are obliged to admit, enter the world—if I may use the expression—more handicapped in the race than others.

Again, there are various forms of tyranny which have to be resisted and subdued by the soul which determines to travel its journey well. There is the tyranny of custom; there is the tyranny of circumstance ; there is the tyranny often of corrupt opinion. How difficult with these at times the battle is, most men who think, and who have any high ideal before them, must sooner or later know. Still in the long run it is true that the will is free to choose.

Where there is freedom, *there* there is responsibility. It would be evidently unjust to laud or to condemn us for the height of our stature or the tone of our complexions ; these things are beyond our power of choice. But praise or blame are obviously not out of place in matters which depend, and in so far as they depend, upon ourselves. Man is a responsible being because he has a free will to choose. But fallen man—it is no mere doctrine, it is an evident fact—soon finds, in beginning the journey of life, that there is a flaw or a warp in his affections ; that he is face to face with insurgent passions. The child of the Christian Church has within him a light of special brightness, making clearer to him the beauty of goodness and the darkness of evil ; he has within him, at least, the germ of faith. How must he be

taught early in life to meet the difficulties of his journey? How must he exercise himself, as life goes on, to confront those difficulties? There is, at least, this answer in the words of the Apostle: "Add to your faith virtue."

VI.

"Add to your faith virtue!" Virtue, whether it be what is called passive or active, whether it show itself in more measurable expressions in the outer scene of things, or in the not less difficult but more hidden characters of restrained-ness and patience, is essentially some form of manly strength. Let us see. We are all of us conscious, in more or less degree, of varying moods of mind. We can hardly trace their origin; we are sometimes perplexed by their existence. Sometimes they seem spiritual, sometimes they seem physical, sometimes they partake of both, but, for gloom or for brightness, there they are. At times our heavens are overcast with clouds; at times the tempests rage with unrelenting fury; at times the sky above us is as brass, at times as the dullest lead; at times, again, there is a whisper of soft breezes or a long wash of sparkling sunlight, or the placid perfectness of the quiet evening, or the moving and pathetic splendour of the dawn. It is not to be denied that right actions are rendered more easy or more difficult according to the mood of mind. Sometimes we may be thankful for its assistance or consolation, sometimes we may feel the force of its hindering power. But we are not to allow ourselves in any case to be the victims of it; we are not to permit our characters to be such that we *depend* upon it for what we do.

For, indeed, the pilgrim on his journey of life has ever to

remember it—that to a great extent he is made master of his own destiny, because to a great extent the formation of his character is placed in his own hands. We can, if we will, purify or select among our governing motives. We can, if we will, to a great extent guide our acts. I am not forgetful of our inherent weakness as fallen creatures ; I am not forgetful of the large assistances which we need, and which are supplied to us Christians by the grace of God. On these we may dwell in their proper places. But still it remains true that our *acts* are in our own power. By repeated acts, all moralists are agreed, *habits* are formed ; and from the formation of habits comes the formation of *character*.

We may be tempted even, by the revelation of the abundant and unexpected mercies and graces promised us by the Christian revelation, to forget the stern necessity of a struggle for obedience to moral truths. Our Lord never allows us for a moment to imagine that the effort towards obedience is a trifling matter. He tells us that to “break one of these least commandments and” to “teach men so” is anyhow “to be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.” We are not to be contented with a vague desire to do right ; we are not to think that shadowy good intentions make up for a careless indifference to persistent faults. Pardon, indeed—pardon generous and loving—is promised to all sincere repentance ; but the deeper and truer the repentance the more thoroughly shall we feel that the wrong repented of was not nothing. What we need, what we must strive to learn, what we must endeavour to teach the young in beginning their journey of life, is to have in the soul a deep sense of the value of *fixed principles*—of truths which are always true under all circumstances :

truths which may be more easily obeyed in some moods, which may demand a heavier tax of sacrifice in others, but which in brightness or in darkness, whether with ease or in difficulty, have a right always to demand obedience. What we need is a *sense of duty*.¹ "Add to your faith virtue."

Of course it is true that the more we love God the less severe, because the more easily powerful, will this sense of duty become. Love lightens all things; but in our strange and complex being we may mistake enthusiastic desire or a ripple of passing feeling for real and lasting love. Our Lord puts us on our guard against this. He warns us that admiration, or enthusiasm, or fancy, or feeling—however useful each of them may be as a tide-wave to lift us up over some difficult shoal of life—are not to be mistaken for the permanent forces of wind and sea which can carry us on our voyage. He says expressly that "not every one that *saith*" unto Him "Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that *doeth* the will of" His "Father which is in heaven." He teaches us that if we love Him we shall "keep His commandments;" that if faith is living there will be added to it virtue; and it is one of the paradoxes of the Christian religion—that is, a seeming contradiction but a real truth—that whilst love, real love, includes duty, duty invigorates and gives lasting force to love.

Indeed, it is this sense of duty which contributes above all things to real strength of character, which makes the soul independent of the varying lights and shadows, of the bright days and dark days of its pilgrimage, and enables it firmly to set the foot forward on the difficult journey of life.

We see men sometimes possessed of wonderful gifts and

fascinating attractiveness; of intellects so keen that they seem able to dissect the very finest fibre of things; of power of speech so subtle that they are capable of expressing, and expressing in a most winning way, the very finest shades of thought; nay, possessed of thoughts so beautiful that their word-painting has about it the vivid and harmonious power of the greatest masters who have ever handled the brush on canvas, or on instruments have ravished our souls with the powers of sound; and yet in critical moments, in times and circumstances which require the exercise of the deepest forces of the soul, they have disappointed us. With all their gifts, with all their attractions, we have wakened with startled astonishment to find them *wanting in principle*, insufficiently possessed of a *sense of duty*.

Or, on the other hand, we may have met those whom at first sight we were inclined to underrate or even to despise. Their gifts have not been great, their attractions have not been evident, there may have been a want in them of much that serves to make life go easily and give a charm to social intercourse. This may have been a misfortune, or it may even have been a fault. It may be true, also, that they were free from temptations and difficulties which beset those with higher gifts. It may be true, further, that those with higher gifts would have been more deserving our admiration had they to those gifts added the solid strength that was lacking. Still it remains true that in some trial of life, under the "stress of the storm" before "the post of the foe," when not brilliancy but real metal was needed, our whole being has risen in admiration, and just admiration, of those whom previously we had half despised, because when it came to the point they showed that which is of supremest importance—high

principle, purity and strength of character, a fruitful sense of duty.

“Add to your faith virtue !” Ah ! indeed it is true, in the difficult path of our pilgrimage, when we have to make serious decisions, when we have to be prepared for sudden emergencies, when we have to resist unlooked-for temptations, when we have to bear unexpected trials, when the well-being of others depends in no slight measure upon our conduct, when our own destiny seems at its very crisis, that much, very much, will depend upon our having learned severe lessons of duty, having fixed deep in our souls the value and greatness of the moral law—having, in a word, by grace indeed, but by grace used with habitual faithfulness,—added virtue to our faith.

VII.

We may perhaps imagine, without irreverence, that the great Apostle who is so emphatic upon the need of diligence in this, is so because he had constantly before his mind a terrible memory which illustrated to him the need of the truth.

Often, doubtless, often must he have gone back to that crisis in his own destiny, which he would remember, on the night of the Passion. There he would see the sad result of a warm and impulsive nature, too little disciplined by the severity of principle. He would see himself as then he was, full indeed of noble feeling, full indeed of sincere affection—and that it had been simple and sincere was in one sense his safety—but not careful enough in taking the measure of his undertakings or in gauging the value of his impulsive declarations, and for want of a sterner sense of duty, led in a spasm of sudden cowardice to the denial of the Master

Whom yet he sincerely loved. And he would see before his eyes—and we may not doubt, that before him he constantly had that vision—the vision of that Master, calm, gentle, strong, never thrown off His balance, never betrayed into the slightest irritation, or unforgiving anger, or untruth ; the perfect example of moral magnificence, the perfect image of human duty in its moment of severest trial, as well as the perfect revelation of the strength of the love and goodness of the living God. If it be so, the practical character, the sweetness, the humility, the wisdom, of S. Peter's inspired Epistles gains for us more and more a pathetic interest.

Ah ! brethren, it is to be feared that for most of us, as in serious moments we review our lives, examine our motives, feel the tyranny of our habits, and look back upon many of our acts,—that we, if we are true, have to deplore denials more dreadful than those of S. Peter, under circumstances of not nearly such grave temptation. May we, by the mercy of God, if it is so, learn something more of his simple love and his broken-hearted penitence, and have the blessing which he had—the eye of eternal pity turned upon us with piercing power, and wakening us up to our better selves !

Anyhow, if we are in earnest in trying to lead our lives fruitfully and nobly, and as followers of Christ, we do well to take pains, we do well to “give diligence” to make our religious faith a deep reality ; to recognize the truth of moral obligation ; to make Right, and Responsibility, and Principle, and Duty words which to us have a real and serious meaning ; and to pray for grace, and to try to respond when grace is given ;—to learn that in a struggle so serious, and in a path so full of peril as this life of ours, virtue, manly effort, is the part of the Christian ; that it is a *duty* to be strong.

THE CARDINAL VIRTUES.

I.

SERMON III.

THE CARDINAL VIRTUES.

L

“For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”—S. MATT. xvi. 26.

HERE our Lord is “ringing changes” on the great contrast. He puts before us in another form that deeply religious thought—the thought of the difference between what is passing and what lasts; between what makes a show, and possesses an appearance, and is likely to attract us if we allow ourselves to rest only on the outside of life, and that which is of real and permanent importance, that towards which our higher selves are drawn, that which our truest and most serious thoughts turn towards with awe and homage, and endorse as true.

Here the contrast is presented under the form of the real *life*, and the mere play of life in external things; the contrast between man’s inner wealth of spiritual possession, which clears and enriches his own personal life, and the outward display of the good things of this world, so fascinating, so ensnaring, but which in no eternal sense can be of benefit, and which assuredly are passing away. The form of the contrast is between “the whole world,” every

conceivable possible accumulation of material and passing advantage, and the "soul" itself, the very life in its awful, its individual, its lasting separateness from merely material things.

I.

Our Blessed Lord is looking forward ; He is dwelling upon in His mind, and unfolding to His disciples the terrible and mysterious form of the close of His earthly life ;—His eye is fixed upon His Passion. S. Peter, with his impulsive, generous hastiness, is not alive to the awful vigour of intensive resolve with which his Master is nerving His sensitive human nature to the task of terrible suffering that lies before Him. He treats his Lord with the off-hand cheeriness of thoughtless encouragement, as though he would remove Him from groundless forebodings, and waken Him up from a morbid condition of mind. There are few things more trying than the shallow efforts at consolation which a kindly, but light and unsympathizing friend offers to a heart laden with real sorrow, into which the would-be comforter has not taken the trouble, or has not moral depth or strength of nature, really to enter ;—

" Vacant chaff well meant for grain ! "

But our Lord treats the shallow advice of the thoughtless disciple as something worse than that. It stands out as a positive temptation. If it had any power, it could only have power to turn the eye from the path of duty, and to hinder the mind from looking steadily forward, and being prepared for what was coming, by facing facts.

If S. Peter's remark could have had the effect which was *in* it, it would have checked that wise prudence by which the soul looks steadily forward and takes a survey of its real

situation. And so the great Teacher seizes the occasion to leave for all a fruitful lesson. He dwells on the great contrast. "There are," He seems to say, "abundant objects in life on which man may fix his choice. There is no denying the immense field of enterprise, of interest, of amusement, of self-aggrandizement, supplied by the world. This outward sphere of sense and time *has* its attractions, and they are very great indeed. It has its uses, but it may be abused. Man must never forget that, though *in* the vast system of things, ultimately he is an individual, personal, separate, immortal being. If he accumulate all the world can give him, he has still to remember that his *life*—that inner, mysterious, lonely self, with vast possibilities of blessing and possibilities as vast of ruin—that *that* consisteth not in the abundance of *things* which he possesseth; that it must have an object on which to fasten its will and affections, and which is proportioned to its character and greatness; that to miss that object, and make others its real end, is to compass its own ruin; and that, suffering or no suffering, it should learn to take a large survey of its place and destiny, and not to confine its gaze or its efforts to the passing things about its path; that in its journey there must be a wise looking forward, an eye kept on the *end*, an earnest and intelligent sense of the helps and the obstacles which surround it in its pilgrimage; that it must not be hasty, thoughtless, reckless, but must ask itself practical questions and act in a practical way; that a narrow view of the value of things is dangerous; that it must exercise the common sense of eternity; that a virtue it needs to make it strong in its onward journey—the virtue of religious Prudence;—for 'what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?'"

II.

Yes, one important force in the journey of life, one which it is necessary to cultivate and store, is prudence. This is a particular and necessary application of moral principle. Christian moralists have ever felt—agreeing here with moralists who had learnt certain truths outside the Christian revelation—that there are four fundamental forms of strength which, because much depends upon them, are called the cardinal virtues. Of these, the first is prudence.

At first sight, it is probably true that this is not a virtue which has great attractions for Christian enthusiasm. This is not unnatural. The worldly prudence with which we are all familiar may, for its purpose, be very useful, but it has a look of meanness about it; it often amounts to the negation of generosity—the calculating, self-seeking temper which will never allow us to make a venture or run a risk for the benefit of others and for noble ends. But its meanness or unloveliness—if we think of it carefully—do not arise from anything lacking in the attitude of the will itself, but in the miserable deficiency in the objects with which it deals. Worldly prudence is real wisdom *in so far* as it is the right process for compassing its own ends. It is the *ends* with which our better selves are at issue, not the vigour or wisdom applied for their accomplishment. Our Blessed Master Himself has a good word for the unjust steward; not that for a moment He has condoned his iniquity, or approved of his dishonest course, but that He felt that, granted the *end* which the man set before him, then the *means* he used and the vigour with which he used them argued a real wisdom. “In his generation”—a bad generation, indeed, with mean and evil objects—but

in his generation, such as it was, he showed "wisdom;" a wisdom much to be desired in those who had higher ends and belonged to a nobler generation. He kept the end he had in view before him, and used the appropriate means. Well would it be, so our Master teaches, if "the children of light" would with the same persistency keep *their* true end before them, and with the same diligence practise the methods appropriate for attaining to it. Worldly prudence is often bad, because its ends are evil and its means in conformity to its ends; but it teaches the lesson that as there are heavenly ends before the awakened soul, so in its difficult journey it needs the strength of religious prudence.

III.

In the journey of life we cannot doubt that the natural or cardinal virtues do go a long way in leading us towards our end. To know their full force, a Christian must believe indeed that they require fresh illumination and further strength from the Holy Ghost. Still, it is true that to plant the foot strongly on the platform of the moral life is to do much towards making our journey what it ought to be. And first, as we have seen, among forces of strength needed for the soul is this prudence.

Let us examine it more closely.

(1) It is a form of strength, having little to do with our emotional nature. It is of the understanding, and shows itself in sagacity, and promptitude, and watchfulness, and wise caution, in swift daring where need be, always mastering the *effect* of word or action, and looking to the end.

(2) It implies, therefore, a mind careful to store experiences and to put them to practical purpose. For

some the Past is a dead thing. Dead, do I say? Buried and forgotten. For the soul strengthened in prudence, the Past is a fund of accumulated treasure. "As things have been so they shall be." On the whole, the prudent soul knows that, amidst all the varying vicissitudes of life, its main conditions do not change. It looks forward, therefore, into the dim future. The dawning brightness of the morning does not conceal from it, rather serves to illumine, the storm-clouds of the western sky. It forecasts the future. What is more, neither mourning over nor forgetting a past fruitful in experiences, nor dreaming vaguely on an impossible future, it so regulates the present—the only time for action we really possess—as to use the past in success or failure, so as to turn the future into a better past. It is that power or practice of the understanding whereby the soul has a real grasp of the sense of fitness, the sense of proportion, the sense of applicability—in fact, of common sense. Divine prudence is little else than the common sense of eternity.

(3) Of what vast moment is this force of moral vigour, we may perhaps realize more fully if we remember two dangers which, among many, are of serious consequence in the spiritual life. There is a danger in *fear*. Fear finds its home in the imagination. It leads sometimes to craven avoidance of duty, to an unmanly shrinking from responsibility, to shiftiness, to dishonesty; to a want of boldness in facing the enemy, a want of outspokenness in behalf of the truth; to ignoble compromises, and petty meannesses, and debasing cruelty. "The fearful" as well as "the unbelieving" are among those who "shall in no wise enter into" the heavenly city. And no wonder. How is the kingdom of heaven to be "taken by violence" if those who aspire to enter

it are cowards? How are the claims of truth to be vindicated, how are the enemies of man to be faced and fought, if the soldiers of the Christian host are cowards? Many a disaster has befallen the Christian Church, many a calamity has almost destroyed the Christian soul, from want of courage. The miserable timidity which fears to suffer, or fears the gibe of the world, or the scorn of the ungodly, has again and again in the history of Christendom led those who should be foremost in the battle to hang back or to betray. Had Athanasius, or Anselm, or Chrysostom, or others like them who might be named in more recent centuries, been timid, where would be now—speaking humanly—the Catholic Faith and the Catholic Church? Had there been less timidity in some who have held Apostolic rank in the Church during many a modern controversy, what sorrow we might have been spared!

And so with the soul. In critical moments of decision, it has often been a habit of “fearfulness” which has checked a man in the path of duty. We fear the consequences of committing ourselves to a godly life; fear the results of a real and hearty surrender of what we know to be wrong; fear the hour of chill and loneliness which must at times come to those who really elect to live for God;—fear and fail. Had there only been courage to do what is right, and leave the unknown to take care of itself, all would have been well; but it was not so, and the lowered tone, and wreck of character—these are the consequences. Well, fearfulness tries to make itself respectable by borrowing the garments of prudence. It is very often a form of worldly prudence. *Corruptio optimi pessima*. Worldly prudence applied to matters of the soul is a dangerous downfall.

(4) This by the way; but there is another danger in the spiritual life, which illustrates the truth before us. Men

cannot always close their eyes to the baseness and danger of cowardice. Whether in the great questions which at times have perplexed the Church, or in the smaller details which form the constant perplexity of souls, we are tempted—are we not?—to meet the difficulty by opposing to the temptation of cowardice the scarcely less dangerous temptation of thoughtless recklessness and rashness. In this, at bottom, there is really a dislike to taking trouble; a dislike to patient thought and diligent prayer; a dislike to what may *seem* the prosaic, but what *is* the real duty of fathoming a question to the bottom, and finding out, as far as we can, its real meaning. It is so much easier, if our nature is hasty or impetuous, to come to a swift conclusion, and do or say slashing things. It is so much pleasanter to some natures *not* to wait, *not* to watch, *not* to “quit them like men and be strong,” but to quit them like acrobats and be nimble; to declare war; to do it “with a light heart;” to say the cutting, the incisive, the startling thing; to adopt the most extreme language, and the most extreme mode of action;—these methods have about them none of the ugly features of cringing timidity, and so they easily commend themselves to our more generous impulses, and stir into admiration the nobler side of our nature.

But they are wrong. Thoughtless rashness may be less ugly, but it is not less evil than craven fear. Esau cannot fail to stir our sympathy, for there is something apparently about him more attractive than Jacob; but Esau, all the same, is a self-seeking and deeply irreligious person, however brilliant he may appear to be. Rashness is not really noble; it is the counterfeit of true courage. Thoughtlessness is not really admirable. It may save us from taking trouble, it may flash as a brilliant meteor, but only because

under the flash there is no lasting light, and under the swift action there is a want of manly patience, that is, of moral strength.

IV.

Now, the true opposing strength, the true and victorious antagonist, who can be trusted to meet and deal with these forms of self-seeking and weakness, is the virtue of real Prudence. It is the habit in the soul which is like the all-surveying, all-directing providence of God. It "sweetly orders all things." It uses the past, foresees the future, and regulates the present. Too keenly is its eye fixed upon eternal things to permit it to flinch in fear before the passing trifle of a dying day. Too calmly does it take within the circuit of its vision *the whole* circumstances of the case before it, to allow of its acting with reckless thoughtlessness, or foolish and ungovernable haste. It keeps the understanding in its just and religious balance. With it the things of time are not valueless, nor the circumstances of the moment of no account. These it knows to be the material out of which characters are framed, these it knows to be the conditions of our mortal probation; but, when all is said and done, they are to it but passing phenomena, not lasting facts; when all is said and done, it cannot allow that the soul of an immortal can rightly find its ultimate object in them. It insists, indeed, upon our share "*in* the world," but with equal vigour it requires that we be not "*of* the world;" when all is said and done, it is the voice of a Divine prudence, the voice of real force of strength in the understanding to which we are listening in the words of the text: "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

V.

It is one of those strange facts observable in every department of human life, that in consequence, doubtless, of the sad confusion to be observed in human character and destiny, which arises, as we know, from the Fall, every good thing has some sort of a wretched counterfeit. It is as though the powers of evil were so impressed with the attractiveness of goodness, that they felt that the only chance of misleading the human soul is to delude it by some sort of *ignis fatuus*, which can make pretence of looking like a real guiding light of moon or stars.

Now, this is the case with the fundamental virtue of "prudence." As we have already seen, there is a bad kind of prudence, and it is very bad. It puts on the airs of a virtue, but it is no virtue at all; it is really a form of the narrowest and grossest selfishness.

Unfortunately, religious people are sometimes taken in by it, and become its advocates. You hear those who ought to know better lecturing the young in this sense; and it is this utterly bad and misleading "prudence," in those whose position or opportunities should have led them to be guides, which has, probably more than anything else, lowered the whole tone of the Christian Church. These are they who play at the "old prophet" over again, and lead the "man of God," who might have had a simple but noble career of usefulness, to a miserable and untimely end. These are they who teach that faith is to make no ventures, that hope is to enter upon no brilliant enterprises, that love is to sever itself from trust. These are they who lead men to think that the highest achievement of the follower of the Crucified is to be a propagandist

of compromise. Cursed children ! they have their place with "death and her daughters," but let them not be admired or followed by the children of light.

VI.

But the very existence of such a counterfeit of the virtue emphasizes the existence of the virtue itself. There *is*—the important thing is to be quite sure of that—a real and beautiful form of manly strength possible to the human soul, and which goes far to conduct it towards its true end in the journey of life, which is rightly called prudence.

There may be said to be three stages in the progress or development of this form of strength. First, there is what we may call perhaps merely moral prudence ; only do not let us be supposed, by the use of the word "merely," in any way to undervalue its importance. In it is implied the clearness of intelligence which is seconded by a vigour of will, by which a soul looks steadily forward towards the objects which present themselves in this life, and selects and classes them according to the demands of duty. In this stage of the virtue even, it is clearly distinguished from its counterfeit ; for it is not self-seeking, but in a high degree unselfish. It impels men to take reasonable and careful thought for others, and in doing so to deny, and sometimes to sacrifice, themselves. At the best we are short-sighted beings ; at the best we may make grave mistakes ; at the best circumstances may defeat, or appear to defeat, our most earnest endeavours and our best-laid plans ; and the worldling, who is the victim of a selfish prudence, may point with scorn to the man of much higher *morale* whose

prudence has been really a virtue, and laugh at his apparent defeat. But no high thing is ever in the long run defeated, no true thing is ever in the long run belied, no real moral effort can ever be absolutely in vain, no sincere act of true prudence can ever be utterly lost.

“Not on the vulgar mass
Called ‘work’ must sentence pass—
Things done, that took the eye and had the price ;
O’er which, from level stand,
The low world laid its hand,
Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice ;

“But all, the world’s coarse thumb
And finger failed to plumb,
So passed in making up the main account ;
All instincts immature,
All purposes unsure,
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man’s amount :

“Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into a narrow act,
Fancies that broke through language and escaped :
All I could never be,
All, men ignored in me,
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.”

Then, again, there is that still higher level which we may call strictly religious prudence. Men are inclined up to a certain point to do right, let us suppose. But they are also inclined to check themselves at that point ; to admit the obligations of morality, but to shun the aspirations of religion. Holy Scripture is full of its warnings against this ; full of teaching that religious thoughts are to occupy our minds, and religious principles to guide our lives, not only in great crises, or when life is drawing to its close, but as a first and important decision of Will. Of course, in human characters, very mixed as they are in this stage of their mortal probation, there are ups and downs in the

success of such teaching. David commits terrible sins, and Saul at first sight seems hardly deserving of blame ; but the one is really and deeply a *religious* character, with a sense of the unseen world, of God, of his own relation to God, of the seriousness of human destiny—the one, I repeat, with all his faults and sins is a truly *religious* character, and the other is not. The one, on the whole, has a deep and true view of life ; the view of the other is light and false. Again, who has ever failed to feel a certain sympathy with and pity for Esau, a certain doubt of and shrinking from Jacob ? But, on a just review, we find that the estimate of Holy Scripture is right. Both had serious faults, but the faults of the one were those of a brilliant and fascinating but light-minded and irreligious man ; the faults of the other were those of a character which at least had resoluteness and tenacity, and a deep and serious religious sense. Now, religious prudence is that high and intelligent looking forward and taking the true measure of things which above all things gives stability and tenacity to religious principle. For religious principle is, as we all must feel, subject to very grave temptations and dangers. An age of intellectual, of political, and literary activity such as this, is by no means the easiest time for calm judgment and quiet thought and self-recollectedness. It is religious prudence which quickens the spiritual ear, so that it hears beyond the din of earthly noises the harmonies of a heavenly world. It is religious prudence which quickens the spiritual eye, and enables it to look beyond the immediate boundary-line and to sweep the horizon of eternity. It is religious prudence which says continually to man in his inner self, when tempted from the true path in the journey of life, by some lure of the world, or fascination of the flesh, or bait of the devil, “ For

what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

But, indeed, we know that this religious prudence is re-enforced by some amongst the highest gifts which are given to men. The Church has ever believed that there are three fundamental virtues, in a nobler sphere of spiritual action than cardinal virtues; three which unite the soul with God, and which therefore are called theological—faith, hope, and charity. She has ever believed that it is part of the gracious office of the Holy Spirit of God to re-enforce or protect or draw out these virtues by the application to the soul of higher gifts. These gifts are sevenfold, as Holy Scripture teaches; and of the seven, four apply to and re-enforce the virtue of faith—namely, wisdom, understanding, counsel, and knowledge; and of the four, two are applied to illuminate and raise the cardinal virtue of prudence. Religious prudence raised to its highest power becomes the very fulness of "wisdom" and "spiritual understanding."

VII.

Ah! brethren, these are not theological subtleties; these are spiritual facts. The beginnings of the moral life are from God; for man is made in His image, and prudence is that fundamental virtue which strengthens man for journeying rightly towards his end; but, like other powers of the human soul, it has to be drawn out by wise teaching and noble example. And more; it never has its fullest range or can fulfil its completest achievement without the fulness of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, Whose office it is to bring the soul into union with Christ, to keep the soul faithfully in that union, and to apply to the soul that wonderful Presence

which can always be made an inward gift, and in which, and in which alone, is found the complete cycle of human virtue—of human forms of strength.

For how wonderful was the prudence of Jesus ! Whatever work He undertook, whatever words He spoke, He was still, although acting in time, living in the spirit of eternity. His eye was never blinded by the immediate prospect, or His ear deadened by the near reverberations of earthly sounds. He was looking to the end. Nothing diverted Him from His true path. He did not commit Himself unto man, for “He knew what was in man ;” He did not allow Himself to be betrayed into any of the devious bypaths along which men, even the best men sometimes, permit themselves to wander. He came into the world to save sinners, and to that salvation He applied Himself with unflagging diligence. He came into the world to be the Revelation of the Father before the eyes of men, and He was the very Image of Him Who is very pitiful, very merciful, very just. Men of His time might have imagined that His career was a catastrophe ; but time has shown that they would have been wrong. Worldly prudence might have been filled with scorn at His persistence in methods and movements so unlike the world ; but His eye penetrated to man’s deepest needs, His eye looked far across the distant hills. As He is the noblest Example of man, as He is “human nature by representation” at its highest, so He showed Himself in all things the perfect Type of religious prudence.

It must never be forgotten that habits of mind are slowly formed ; slowly but surely. The spiritual life has many stages. There is a supernatural *beginning* in the souls of the baptized from the moment of the grace of Baptism.

Then there are forces lodged in the soul, by the gift of regeneration, which may be developed in union with Him Who is the Head of the Body—in union with Christ. These may be nurtured and expanded by prayer, by sacraments, by all responses to grace given, whether *actual* or *sanctifying*; and so the soul may grow “to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” These may also be checked by lapses and by sin, and again—if such be the case—may be reinvigorated and placed in a state of living progress, by the grace of repentance, and other influences of grace. One thing, however, is certain, that in “the net result”—if so we may speak—habits are being formed by repeated acts, and habits at last give the complete complexion to character.

In the formation of habits consists, in large measure, our responsibility. It is difficult to say when the power over our final character passes out of our hands—never entirely, during this state of mortal probation; but it cannot be doubted that every surrender to evil makes the formation of habits of goodness more difficult, and, with it, increases the difficulty of a final state of character in accordance with the teaching and ideal left by Christ. There are such things as miracles of grace. “God,” it has been said, “is very busy even about death-beds,” and we may be sure that “the Judge of all the earth will do *right*,” and that everything He *can* do, even for the most wilful of His creatures, will be done, only always consistently with respect for their own free will and consent. If a soul preserve its real *will* to turn from evil, severe as its loss may be, it cannot finally be lost. But the will to turn from evil necessarily becomes weaker and weaker with every acquiescence in what is wrong, and so the early and steady formation of habits of good, by energetic and persistent choice in acts of mind

and conduct, becomes of the last importance. The spiritual life is made up of these efforts of will, assisted by the grace of God. Blessed are they who *early* learn this truth. It is more easy to *keep* than to regain; more easy to *resist* than to re-conquer; more easy to *hold on* in an upward and laborious path than to start again and again, if the soul wilfully allow itself to be borne down to the valley below.

Now, one of the fundamental habits of virtue to be cherished and developed from the first is this cardinal form of strength which we are considering—religious prudence.

This seems to be before the mind of the great Teacher when He says, "In your patience *possess* ye your souls." This calm *possession* of the soul, by which the hand is held steadily upon the rein, and nature is not permitted wildly to have its way, is an exercise of this virtue.

Possibly, brethren, this may be felt more deeply and seen more clearly still if we consider two things.

There are two forces which blind our spiritual eyes to truth and duty.

(1) There is *passion*. It rises like a heated exhalation from a nature on fire with selfish desire. It is a blinding fog. We know it in covetous persons—how it blinds men to the rays of light which show the path of generous and self-denying duty; how it distorts all objects in shape and size; how it destroys proportion, and darkens the vision of God. We know it in the regions of the animal nature—how it deadens even to the sense of obvious self-interest; how it reduces nature to confusion, corrupts what otherwise would be high affections, debases what were otherwise noble emotions, shuts the soul against human tenderness, and empties it of pity. We know it in political struggle—how it paralyzes patriotism, leads to devious paths of subterfuge,

stimulates natures otherwise noble to almost enthusiastic falsehood. Passion, like a wild animal—to change the metaphor—may be held in leash by a strong hand. Passion may be restrained at least by religious prudence.

The soul may not have reached the highest altitudes of spiritual strength; it may not be able to close its eyes entirely to fascinating but destructive temptation; it may still have a long journey before it, and a fiercer battle, before *that* is achieved. But the power of religious prudence in it will—all the time—help it to be steady, to “keep its head,” to “possess” itself, and, without ceasing to feel the glamour of passionate longing, still at least sternly to say to the seductive enticement, “What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”

(2) And there is the force of *prejudice*. If passion corrupts and defiles, prejudice paralyzes and withers. It withers the fair shoots of promise in the tree of life; it paralyzes the otherwise buoyant efforts towards better things. We inherit, or by hasty and unscrupulous conclusions we acquire, a number of indefinable assumptions. They come to us in a hundred ways. We pick them up and store them by, or they are blown into our minds like dead leaves through an open door, or they are drifted in like stray flotsam and jetsam from wreckage on a stormy beach. They get there and we keep them, and then are proud of them and zealous for them, not from their inherent value but because they are ours. And we crowd our minds with them, so that they become confused lumber-lofts instead of decently furnished rooms. If they remain, they take the space where better things might be, and, what is more, they block the way. This cannot always be helped, for we are fallible and short-sighted creatures; but any absence of

truth is a loss, and to hold the truth in all things as far as may be should be our earnest effort. Religious prudence—the calm and vigilant habit of looking steadily at things as they are, of taking the measure of the truths and duties of the soul's place and future,—it teaches us to take a wise survey of our possessions. It reminds us that not accumulation of anything anyhow which may seem of value for the moment is *the* consideration. It repeats, "Look and consider what is valuable; look and consider what is *really* in the long run valueless or worse." It persistently repeats, "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

And then there is another consideration which emphasizes the same truth. Prudence is that practical form of strength which puts to real purpose the results of experience. We are tempted to doubt the regular "reign of law" in the moral, even if we do not in the natural, world. Experience teaches us how invariable that action is; and it is the function of religious prudence to keep before us the fact. A thousand things in life bring before our minds those cases and situations from which are accumulated spiritual lessons and spiritual experiences. These we may neglect; or we may use, and use to effect. So long as the eye is closed, or the mind inattentive to the real teachings of life, vast stores of knowledge, knowledge only to be won by experience, are miserably squandered. But once let religious prudence assert its power in the soul, then no ordinary incident, no trying calamity, no severe and pressing sorrow, no contact with character, nay, no failure of our own, but brings its lesson of immense, we may say of never-ending, value. Yes, *this* becomes a force of character earnestly to be cultivated; near, indeed, it is to the calmness

of the Eternal Throne ; near to the " perfect peace " in which those are " kept " " whose minds are stayed on " Him.

There are indeed, brethren, few spiritual exercises more useful, more necessary, than to take a survey, from time to time, and in our more serious moments, of the meaning and objects of life. We cannot doubt that to many men—surely, indeed, to all men, however busy they may be with the passing, the engrossing, things of this world—there are borne in, from time to time, some whispers from the Great Unseen, some warnings of the folly of a reckless and a random course, some calls to higher thoughts, some appeals to their nobler natures, some reminders of the infinite valuelessness of all that is except as it serves to form their characters, to

"Try them, and turn them forth
Sufficiently impressed."

How powerful the world is to check the uprisings of the soul in answer to such reminders and appeals, such calls and warnings, we all know too well ! Surely it is our part and duty, in obedience to those moral laws which govern the growth of our habits and character, to find time for serious thought upon our life and our future. I do not now mean the duty of self-examination or the duty of prayer, but I am sure that few moments are better spent, alike for ourselves and—in view of our increasing influence for bad or good—for others, than those in which, when the Babel of voices is hushed, and the hum of the world is still, we allow ourselves to look facts steadily in the face ; allow ourselves to listen to the voice of religious prudence ; allow ourselves to be asked from above, and insist on our very selves supplying an answer to the question, " What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ? "

THE CARDINAL VIRTUES.

II.

SERMON IV.

THE CARDINAL VIRTUES.

II.

“And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled.”—ACTS xxiv. 24, 25.

I.

It must have been in the early days of June, in the year 58, that the event recorded in the text occurred. There are few scenes, even in Holy Scripture, more dramatic at once from the depth of their meaning, and externally, at the same time, from their startling simplicity. It is worth our while to dwell for a moment upon the three figures before us on the stage; for they bring out, when we consider them one by one, first the soul-subduing difference that there often is in this world between the apparent and the real; and next, they illustrate the value of fundamental moral truths in the formation of character and for the conduct of the journey of life.

First of all, there was Felix, the Roman procurator, a man who was an apt example of the too common, self-seeking, unjust, and debauched official in the corrupt days of the empire. He had apparently done one good thing, and only one, during his tenure of office; he had cleared the country

of bandits, and suppressed the seditious uprisings of certain fanatics. He was a freedman of the emperor, and had great influence at court. It is not improbable that he had ruled in Palestine even before his present term of office, and now he had held his exalted position for about double the length of time usually allowed to a Roman procurator. He had been a friend of Capito, who himself was a favourite with Nero, and who had been noted for and convicted of malpractices when pro-prætor of Cilicia ; another of his friends was Simon Magus. Had he been a just man, he would have dismissed the case against Paul after the first hearing, as it had utterly broken down. But Felix was not just ; he was crafty and worldly. He feared to offend the leading Jews, and he was anxious to wring money from S. Paul as a ransom. He was a man who had been guilty of unjust and oppressive exactions to gratify his avarice ; he had led a life of private debauchery, and by the assistance of his friend Simon Magus had induced the young and beautiful wife of the King of Emesa to forsake her own husband for him. He was a man not wanting in intelligence, and sufficiently acquainted with Christianity to be deeply interested in hearing so leading and powerful an advocate of it as S. Paul. Like all bad men, he had scarcely reckoned upon the tremendous force that there is in real goodness, and when the prisoner before him "reasoned" of those fundamental moral truths with which he could not fail to be acquainted, and which in his life he had persistently disregarded, we cannot wonder that "Felix trembled," especially when it was enforced upon his conscience that a final sanction for the moral law would yet be made clear to all mankind in the "judgment to come."

And then there was Drusilla. 'There seems little doubt

that it was not in the Herodian judgment hall, but in some of the private apartments of the palace, that the discussion referred to in the text took place. Drusilla was the second wife of the Roman procurator; she was the daughter of Herod Agrippa, late King of Judæa, and sister of another Herod Agrippa, now ruler of Trachonitis. She is described as being extremely beautiful; she had married the King of Emesa; she was of the blood-royal of Judah, still in her girlhood, being barely twenty, yet she had forsaken her husband through the craft of his friend, the arch-impostor Simon Magus, and was now living as the wife of a man much her senior in years, far her inferior in birth, of utterly dissolute character, but holding an exalted position and possessed of immense influence as a favourite freedman of the emperor. Almost everything that the world could give seemed at the disposal of Drusilla and Felix. One thing, at any rate—obedience to which must be a condition for true human happiness—they had both set at defiance, and that was the moral law.

And then there was the prisoner, Paul. What a startling contrast! Deprived of his liberty, chained probably to a soldier, suffering under utterly baseless and practically disproved charges, with everything that makes life worth living to ordinary men lost to him, with a painful present and a future wrapt in clouds of dispiriting gloom, surrounded by implacable and unscrupulous enemies, the object of a hatred so intense that it led the men who felt it to throw off even the most ordinary decencies of demeanour, which are usually allowed in high-placed persons to mask the more abominable features of crime—he yet stood there possessed of a quiet courtesy, of a wise and delicate tact, above all, of a searching and even terrifying power which

comes only to a man who is in his own soul, in the real *self* which makes our inner being absolutely and fearlessly free. Why? Well, just because that which his hearers had so recklessly thrown to the winds, he had submitted to with a scrupulous obedience—viz. the moral law. Can we wonder—for even the worst men at times cannot close their eyes to light flashed upon them, cannot hush the voice of conscience, cannot make their ears deaf,—not altogether deaf,—to the calls from another world,—can we wonder that such a one as Felix should have trembled under the heart-searching words of such a one as Paul, especially when he discussed such serious fundamental moral questions, especially when—while speaking of “the faith in Christ,” he taught its moral seriousness,—he “reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come”?

II.

In the journey of life it is, we have contended, of the gravest importance that those fundamental forms of moral strength which are usually called the cardinal virtues should be developed and hold sway in the soul. Reason itself in all men bears witness to the importance of ethical truth. We know well enough from it, quite antecedently to all argument and deduction, that certain things are unchangeably right and certain other things unchangeably wrong. We are well enough aware, not merely from the experience of the consequence of disobedience, but by the very nature of things, that the moral law holds a supreme and unchanging sway. Strengthened as it is, re-enforced, re-invigorated, receiving solemn sanction from revealed religion, yet it stands in an independence of its own with a power

antecedent to revelation. Its rules, in fact, *are* revelations to all mankind. No human being has ever yet lived and attained to full consciousness without having some sense, not only that he *is* a living being, but that he is under the sway of moral obligation. Of course this sense of moral obligation could not be without a corresponding sense of freedom of choice. In spite of all the vague and fatuous absurdities which have been put forth in the guise of *determinism*, we are well aware that in the interior citadel of our moral being we are free to choose right or wrong. Those forms of strength in the will, grounded on right reason and developed more and more by careful obedience to what is right, which enable or assist the will freely to act in fundamental questions of duty on the side of right, are called the cardinal virtues. How important a place among these is held by prudence we have already seen; but besides it, there are three other forms of strength, or cardinal virtues, needed for the soul's true equipment in the journey of life. Terrible indeed it would be in such a world as this, with such a nature as ours, and with such a future as lies before us all, to be entirely bereft of these. The wretched Felix had been so steadily doing violence to his moral nature, that he had left himself unarmed by such virtues, but still unable to close his conscience against the sense of their value. Paul seemed to see what was the fundamental need of the unhappy man; seemed to know what chord might best be struck to lead him to repentance; seemed to divine where—heathen as he was—he might have done far better, and had, in fact, conspicuously failed. To such a one he did not apparently plunge into the mysteries of the faith, but appealed to the fundamental certainties of moral consciousness, and wakened him, at least for the moment, to a trem-

bling astonishment at the magnificence and the necessity of justice and self-restraint and fortitude, so possible and so necessary for those who ought to endeavour to be true to the claims of others and the claims of their own souls, and ought to be prepared to face "judgment to come." It is true, indeed, that no cardinal virtues are sufficient in themselves, or can be sufficiently developed without the aid, the constant aid, of the grace of God to frail and failing man ; it is true, indeed, that the sense of constant failure has served to make men feel the need of a Saviour. But Christianity, after all, does not dispense with, it fulfils and supplies strength to meet the requirements of, the moral law.

III.

"He reasoned of righteousness ;" perhaps it is more true to say he reasoned of *justice*. Doubtless righteousness has to our minds a larger sense, but St. Paul's expression on the whole more generally implies what we mean by justice, and we are thus brought face to face, in the apostle's argument, with the three remaining forms of strength, which lie at the basis of the moral life and are called the "cardinal virtues."

Justice! It is one of those fundamental and primary intuitions, of the existence of which in the human mind we can give no rational account, except that it is there by the will of the Creator. It is simply a *fact* about man—a *fact* which gives the lie to materialistic philosophy—that he is conscious—certainly more or less conscious—of the power of the moral law and of the absolute obligation laid upon him to obey it. Now, justice is a fundamental principle in the moral law. It has been defined to be "the constant and perpetual will to render to every one his right." Yes,

to "every one;" from God, down to the "meanest of His creatures," justice requires that we should be respectful to the *rights* of each. The rights of any beings, we are taught by Christian moralists—nay, by moralists who have not known Christianity—must mean that which belongs to them by the very terms of their nature. The nature of God is infinite. If we may speak of Him as in any sense limited, we can only mean such limitations as arise out of His attributes; that is, He would not be God if He were not perfect Holiness, perfect Love, perfect Justice. His rights, then, are infinite and consistent with His nature. It is a very solemn but a very practical thought, that we are doing violence to the virtue of justice if we neglect prayer, attendance at the divine service, proper use of the sacraments. What is called a "practical" age, and what are called "practical" people, do not fail to insinuate that "to labour is to pray," in such a sense that real prayer and religious exercises may be allowed—if I may use the expression—"to go by the board." This is wrong; we owe to God a proper exercise of the devotional life, and if we fail in devotion and in worship, we are guilty of an injustice; we are not respecting the rights of our Creator.

But if justice makes a claim upon us to respect the rights of God, it also demands that we are not to forget the rights of man. How frightfully these rights have been violated, amidst the corruptions of civilized and uncivilized communities, we know too well, perhaps by ordinary observation, certainly by a glance at history. Justice demands of us obedience to the properly enacted laws of our country—obedience to rightful authority; but—however Christian patience may raise us high enough to enable us to endure when wrong is done to us—it is no part of justice to require

of us obsequiousness in the presence of unjustifiable assumption, or submission to tyranny. There is a large theatre in which justice ought to sway us in the world of what are called business transactions, and in those matters where it is due to others that rewards, or honours, or gifts, or commendations *should* be given, though they may be withheld. It has been truly said that Conscience is the judge of conduct, and Justice is the officer to whom is committed the right execution of the sentence. Deliberately to put aside this officer from the execution of his duty, is to incur a very grave responsibility. There are forces in the soul, as we know, which entice it into this dangerous course. Sometimes it is so enticed by covetousness. It was a just act of Mary of Bethany to anoint the feet of the Saviour with the precious ointment, but the traitor Judas was betrayed into an *unjust* objection to the act by a pretended care for the poor, but real covetousness: "Not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein." Envy also, as we know, has led the soul before now in the same fatal course. "Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell . . . and Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him." Murder is often an act of gross injustice, stimulated by envy. It is the same with fear. Fear, it is truly said, is apt enough to be cruel, because fear stifles the sense of justice in the soul. Probably there is no trial on record more grossly unjust in all its details from beginning to end than the trial of our most Holy Redeemer. In that trial there is something pathetic and full of awful warning, in the account of the struggle in the soul of Pilate, between the sense of justice and overwhelming fear. "Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above : *therefore*

he that delivered Me unto thee hath the greater sin." Here was Christ's own statement of the majesty of human law, deriving its real force as it does from its relation to the Almighty Ruler of all.¹ Here also is Christ's own reminder that *therefore* to play fast and loose with the solemnities of human law, to allow anything to override and stifle the sense of justice in those who have the administration of law in their hands, is to be guilty of a very serious sin. Pilate—unhappy man—looked the question full in the face. "And from thenceforth sought to release Him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this Man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend." From that moment the cause of goodness was lost; fear destroyed justice; Pilate's soul was wrecked, and Christ "was delivered unto them to be crucified." Is it any wonder, brethren, that in the account given by S. John of those who shall "in no wise enter into" the holy city, there are included the "fearful"?

The soul, again, is often led to incur the same grave responsibility by listening to the seductions of ungovernable desire. Seldom has there been an act of pitiless and cruel injustice perpetrated worse than the act of David towards Uriah. It is sad to think how the shepherd-king, with his warm heart and his real yearning for higher things, allowed himself to be betrayed into acts so contrary to this fundamental virtue; but we know that the stimulating power which led him to such conduct was ungoverned sensual desire. Ambition will do the same; so will weak and selfish although sincere affection. Eli was grossly unjust to the people of Israel and to his own children, and justice was dethroned in his soul by the miserable feebleness that made him forget the restraint that should be exercised by a parent over a child.

¹ See on *this* point Dr. Liddon's sermon, "Christ and Human Law."

Absalom, again, dearly loved as he was by his father, and with a fascinating attractiveness which won its own way among the people of Israel, yet allowed ambition so to steel his heart, that the first principles of just dealing alike with the people and with his own father were forgotten.

But perhaps nowhere is it more necessary to insist, both for ourselves and for others, on the sacredness of this fundamental virtue, than when we touch on the question of *punishment*. We are weak enough to think sometimes that the only use of punishment is to deter the wrong-doer or to deter others by his example, or else to improve the character of him who does wrong. This is true, but it is not the whole truth. The value of punishment first of all is the making of satisfaction to the law, or sense of right which has been outraged. "Punishment," it has been well said, "is the *right* of the wrong-doer." It is unfair to him that his right should not be recognized, and that he should be left unpunished. It is a saying of a great Greek philosopher that "the doer of unjust actions is miserable in any case; more miserable, however, if he be not punished and does not meet with retribution, and less miserable if he be punished and meets with retribution at the hands of gods and men." It is a mark of right-mindedness and of a nature with real nobility in it, and the whispers of conscience not unattended to, to be thankful for punishment where punishment is felt to be deserved. What a light this throws upon the corrective discipline of the Christian Church, upon the readiness to acknowledge our sins, though the acknowledgment itself is often a severe and trying punishment! What a light this throws upon the cases of criminals who have willingly given themselves up to justice! What a light this throws upon that strange

and striking revelation of Holy Scripture, "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth" !

Is it to be wondered at, then, that when Felix had dethroned this primary virtue by ambition, by covetousness, and by lust, that "he trembled when S. Paul reasoned of justice" ? Surely, surely, our strictness in the life of devotion and worship towards God, in the life of equitable and true dealing towards our neighbours, in the life of fairness and consistency in our own souls, must depend in great measure on the use we make in the journey of life of this primary intuition of justice. We ought to be careful "to give alms of such things as we possess ;" careful to "walk uprightly, and work righteousness, and speak the truth from the heart ;" careful to make restitution, if we have defrauded God, or our neighbours, or ourselves, of what is rightly due ; careful to examine ourselves on all these points, remembering always that at the end of the journey of life there comes the Great Assize, where truth and justice cannot be set aside by opposing vices ; remembering always that "the righteous Lord loveth righteousness ; His countenance beholdeth the thing that is *just*."

IV.

"He reasoned of temperance." The expression as it stands is scarcely adequate. S. Paul had, we cannot doubt, before his mind that mysterious and magnificent characteristic of the kingdom of God which is so greatly insisted upon in Holy Scripture. It has been truly observed that in the Scriptures, but more especially in the Psalms, there is a constant utterance of the wonder and awe with

which religious minds dwelt upon the outward things of nature, as showing the might and majesty of God ; but this very expression of awe and wonder throws into clearer relief the deep sense they had of that which is one of the most striking parts of God's government—His moral purpose. Scripture teaches us, indeed, of a God Who is a Creator and Ruler of all things ; but it speaks even more impressively of a God Who, in very close relations with the creatures He has made, is above all a moral Governor and has a moral purpose. And Scripture makes it clear that it is the duty and blessing of the creature to conform to this moral purpose of the Creator. That kingdom, it has been truly enough said, cannot be fully understood by man, he cannot alter its ways or change it by his influence ; but it is ruled by unchanging laws which are revealed to him just so far as to enable him to understand how important, above all things, it is for him to conform to the eternal law of right and wrong.

Now, the Apostle had succeeded in some measure in bringing this home to the darkened or neglected conscience of Felix, and therefore it was that he “trembled.” In this second department of his reasoning, S. Paul had gone even deeper into the heart of the moral question with which man has to grapple in his mortal pilgrimage than he had in reasoning upon justice. For justice is a virtue of the understanding and the will, while temperance is more of the affections and the heart. If the understanding is the basis of character, if the will is the crown, it is the affections and the heart that are the centre. Find out that on which a man sets his heart,—this is an axiom of all religious teachers, learnt from our Lord Himself,—and you will know whither his character is tending. To do full justice

to S. Paul's meaning, we must call the virtue "self-control" rather than "temperance." In its fullest sense it means the complete mastery of the immortal spirit over all the departments of its activity, but especially over those which relate to the affectionate nature, and are situated upon that border-land where flesh and spirit join.

What a terrible border-land it may be—ravaged by barbarian armies, desolated by ungoverned free-lances, rendered dangerous by brigands, haunted by spirits of evil, covered with cloud, swept with tempest, chilled with anticipations of a dreary future, fearful in solitude and darkened with night! What a beautiful border-land it may be—regulated by wise government, free from insolent and cruel intruders, a country of liberty, a place of peace, filled with holy hopes and fair visions of purest imaginings, and where fresh flowers spring, and pure breezes breathe, and fairest forms are seen, and presences suggestive of infinite beauty are realized, and suns with sunlight which brightens but never scorches are felt, and evenings without langour and yet with delicious sense of repose are enjoyed, and in which there are nights that never know the gloom of darkness, but always the fairness of untroubled moonlight or the deeper stillness of clear and peaceful stars! Land of strength and glory and beauty, of high yet human affections, of lowly yet Divine submissions! Land in which meet the most mysterious and blessed things known this side eternity—all forms and changing glories of love which belongs at once to Divine perfection and expresses itself in human tenderness! How, my friends, is this border-land to be kept in its perfection, not to be lost in unutterable desolation? There is at least one answer; let it suffice for the present—by self-control.

Think of it for a moment, how it acts upon our nature and circumstances, and upon some of the critical events of life. S. Paul would have been the very man to point out how the highest things touch the lowest, how the largest thoughts apply to the most ordinary details. How this comes home to us in this connection! This lordly virtue, so suggestive of the great and just and loving Ruler of the moral world, touches our life in its struggling journey at every point. In the use of food, it saves from sins of gluttony and luxury, reminding us not to put means in place of ends, reminding us of the beauty of "plain living and high thinking," reminding us that "man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God," teaching us at times the beauty and privilege and blessing of the Christian fast. It comes home to us in matters which touch the thirst of the body. Its power in this matter, the necessity of its sway, ought not to be dimmed in any minds by the vulgar folly or ill-advised heresy which some of the advocates of so-called "temperance" have allowed themselves to talk. It is not to be wondered at if, when drunkenness has become a crying and a deadly sin, those who have opposed it have permitted themselves to speak occasionally in extravagant language, and in withstanding one grievous vice have apparently lost sight of many necessary virtues. Self-control, the "temperance" of the Apostle, is a much wider thing than temperance in drink; but it includes that, and there it should have its rightful sway. Think of it as it touches one of the deepest things in human life—the relation of the sexes; how it glorifies and exalts Holy Marriage, and how, in married life, it teaches self-respect and due consideration of each for the other. It is that virtue which helps to purify

and ennoble young life, by bringing to bear its powerful sway on those five senses which are the avenues by which external temptations approach and may defile the soul. Think of it, how it extends its sway through the affections to the intellect, how it brings its rule to bear upon the tongue which "no man can tame;" and how it insists, in the choice of reading, upon the selection of that which shall not stain the imagination or pervert the moral sense. Think of it, how it comes in with its balancing power in teaching each of us how wisely to choose our occupations, to choose our amusements, to employ our time, to make use of our money. How often a life, otherwise rich in gifts and opportunities, is emptied of half its power and blessedness by the absence of this form of strength; how often a life less highly gifted, and with a range of circumstances and opportunities sufficiently narrow, is yet raised to a pitch of real heroism by the exercise of this form of strength! For it is self-control—this "temperance" of the Apostle—which so balances the gifts and possessions of the soul in its journey of life, that none are wasted, none misused.

Ah! we have to learn to hold the hand steady on the rein, lest the brute that is within us all take the bit in his teeth and drag after him the chariot of life to destruction. Ah! we have to go back to the thoughts of the Baptist in the desert; or, further still, to Daniel and his three companions—we have to listen to their cry, "Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants. So he consented . . . and at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer." Ah! we have to remember

that in the journey of life, if the moral law is to have its sway, we "ought to use the world as not abusing it;" to consider the greatness and destiny in store "for the body of our humiliation," which "He shall change," that it may be "fashioned like to the body of His glory." Ah! we should pray and strive for grace and wisdom in the journey of life; not to live at random, but to live by principle. Ah! we should think betimes of death and judgment; we should never forget the moral lessons of the Cross; we should bear in mind that, if the journey of life is to be nobly travelled, there must be no forgetfulness of self-control. Is it to be wondered at that in that solemn moment, when the real representative of moral power as it comes from God stood as a criminal before him who officially represented it, but in his own life had so basely betrayed—is it to be wondered at that, when Paul "reasoned of justice and self-control, Felix trembled"?

V.

"He reasoned of the judgment to come!" That is the force of the expression. To S. Paul's mind there was no sort of doubt of the fact of that great event in which God will "wind up His final account with His responsible creatures." There was no doubt of its definiteness, of its particularity, of its application to every individual soul; and Felix was made to feel that it was a matter which touched himself quite as much as it touched S. Paul. "And Felix trembled."

My brothers, S. Paul's argument and the effect of it at least suggests to us the last of those forms of strength which are called the cardinal virtues. Whatever else Felix was wanting in, in view of the last great trial, he was

certainly wanting in Fortitude. Among the many dangers of the spiritual life, some of the most serious are those which arise from fear. It finds its home in the imagination, undisciplined, unrestrained. Men, the victims of fear, may be fierce, may be boastful, very frequently are cruel, but they are never strong. That kind of strength which lives within the soul and keeps the will steady and straight in really critical moments, which impels it to conquer the various difficulties which are strewn across the path of life ; that kind of strength which sometimes enables the soul to stand patient and determined amidst fierce assaults, which sometimes inspires it to vigorous and conquering effort,—that is fortitude.

We have talked of the journey of life, but we do well to remember that it is not unlike the march of an assaulted army across the territory of an untiring foe. The life of the Christian is unquestionably, from one point of view, a life of battle. "Be strong," says the Apostle, "in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness among high beings." S. Paul's eye saw behind the immediate appearances of life, and detected the reality and the earnestness of the foes of the soul ; and in many and many a passage the same truth is brought out in Scripture, and the truth so taught is—is it not?—countersigned by experience. Who that knows anything of life will deny that resolution and manfulness and endurance of evil, and a determined and steady balance of will, and a high-minded contentedness, and a ready presence

of mind, and real courage, and unfailing perseverance, are needed, if in ordinary life, with its outside claims and its deceptive appearances, we are to live in the power of an interior spirit which is governed by the great thoughts of eternity? Who will deny, in fact, that any serious estimate of life as a Christian supports the Apostle's exhortation, "Be strong"?—reminds us, in fact, that for any real and earnest effort in life there is a need of fortitude? Surely this is more and more plain to us when we remember that as to that lordly power of self-command, of which we think when we speak of moral courage; that which, as it has been well said, "makes a man, who knows and measures all that his decision involves, not afraid to be alone against numbers; not afraid, when he knows that he is right, of the consciousness of the disapprobation of his fellows, of the face, of the voice, the frown, the laugh of those against him; moral courage, by which a man holds his own judgment, if reason and conscience bid him, against his own friends, against his own side, and of which, perhaps, the highest form is that by which he is able to resist, not the sneers and opposition of the bad, but the opinion and authority of the good;"—I say, surely this is more and more plain to us when we remember that the very pith and core of this is *fortitude*.

My brothers, I have done. Let us remember that in the journey of life, whether we have sunlight or whether we have shadow, it is only Religion that can really guide us safely to the end, and that no religion will be worth the having which has not its root deep in eternal things, which is not fixed and steadied by a grasp of the moral law. We do well to remember, in an age in which religion is watered down into mere sentimental philanthropy, and we

are all, therefore, in danger of losing backbone, that self-indulgence and sloth, and playing tricks with conscience, and forgetting the last great crisis of the destiny of the creature, may amuse us now, or make life seem to go smooth and easy, but that these things shake and injure those forms of moral strength which we ought to make our own, and eventually, if indulged in, will lead us, not, like Paul, to face adversity with calm and courteous determination, but, like Felix, terrified by the prisoner at the bar, in craven fear to tremble.

We do well to remember that if we love God and seek God, these fundamental virtues will be strengthened in the soul; that being followers of the Cross which showed the wisest prudence, the most unswerving justice, the most entire self-control, and the most noble fortitude, we shall learn to be indeed good Christians, and, because good Christians, also—what we need to be—brave men.

CONSCIENCE.

SERMON V.

CONSCIENCE.

“Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.”—ACTS xxiv. 16.

WE are still in the presence of Felix, but in an earlier stage of the proceedings connected with the trial of S. Paul. The great Apostle has gone deep into those grounds of things which could be easily understood by his critic and his judge.

There were deeper things, indeed, which it was in his power to have revealed to Felix, but to the Roman procurator these would have been quite unintelligible. S. Paul, like a wise man in teaching others, begins from what they know, in order to lead them to some understanding of what they do not know. However sunk in corruption, however without clear and definite knowledge of an unseen world, all men sooner or later have heard the voice of Conscience.

I.

Brethren, in treating of those early and important powers which are of such value in the right conduct of the journey of life, it is not enough to dwell upon the cardinal virtues; we must not think only of the witnesses and the

advocates, we must also remember the Judge. Nothing—let it be said at once—nothing can be of greater moment for the true management of the journey of life, than that we should early learn to follow the Apostle's example, and exercise ourselves to keep "a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men." Certainly—we may pause to remember it—we can have no better guide in this than S. Paul. He may have made great mistakes; on one memorable occasion he was certainly an abettor in a great crime; but whatever he did and whatever he said, no man can read his life and his words without feeling that whether his conscience was uninstructed or whether it was distorted, at least it was obeyed. We cannot be much mistaken in saying that a conscience very faulty indeed, but strictly submitted to, brought him right in the end. This by the way.

There is an effort made in modern times, as I suppose it has been made more or less in all times, to account for Conscience in some other way than the way in which it has been thought of by mankind in general and by the Christian Church. In fact, there are two ways of putting forward moral questions, and between them we have to choose. The one way is to assert the force of motives and impulses from within—to declare that there is a real and essential order among them; that there is to all of us the possibility of consciousness of this order; that this consciousness is the conscience which shows us where to place, how to use, how to obey or disobey, these ranks of impulses,—how to live a moral life. The other way is to look at the consequences of our conduct, to decide whether those consequences produce happiness, or I ought rather to say pleasure; if they do, to approve the course of conduct;

if they do not, to ban it. The latter is the teaching of the utilitarian philosophy; the former is the teaching of the Christian Church.

The truth is that to act upon the guidance of the latter theory may be sagacious, but it is a matter of pure reason, and has nothing moral about it at all. The former course has nothing whatever to do with consequences; it arises from an inner guidance of duty, and it takes its force and meaning and sanctity from the absolute rule of right, which is the all-holy will of God. The difference is worlds asunder; it would be ridiculous for a man who was only guiding his life by a calculation of the benefit of possible consequences to say, like the Apostle, "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men."

II.

There are certain facts about Conscience which no man can deny.

(1) Whatever it may mean, it gives us the feeling of being in the presence of One Who is higher than ourselves. We are not here being merely judged by ourselves; we are being judged by another. Of course, it is open to those who contradict the Christian's belief about Conscience to deny that our faculties are to be trusted. It is equally open to the Christian to answer, "In that case there is no ground for placing any faith in them, when they supply to us scientific and physical knowledge." This really settles the question. It is nonsense, and we know that it is nonsense, to commit intellectual suicide. We have a sense of *duty*; we know that we *ought* to follow

one course of action to avoid another ; what we *ought*, we *owe*, therefore we owe it to some one ; and the voice which speaks in us, condemning or approving, Right Reason teaches us, is the voice of Him to Whom the debt is due. Conscience has, then, all the authority which belongs to a voice outside ourselves, ruling our inmost motives and thoughts and conduct according to an eternal law of right. My brothers, to keep "a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men," is at least to recognize that there is a voice of authority from without, which speaks to us—under different conditions if you like, with varying modifications of clearness if you please—but which *does* speak to us, and to deliberately disobey which is a very grave thing indeed.

(2) There is, as it seems to me, another characteristic of Conscience. It is, if I may so say, a *personal* possession, and a personal possession which concerns itself with the deepest things in our nature. It stands as a living witness, so to speak, within us, of the magnificence and supremacy of goodness, above all other subjects of human thought and all other objects of human ambition. It does not reprove us for mistakes or failures in matters where only taste or opinion come in. It finds no fault with me if I do not achieve a stanza of poetry, or the expression of a musical phrase, or the colour of a sunset in a water-colour sketch, or the turn of a sentence in a literary work, entirely to my æsthetic satisfaction. No ; it goes into my innermost being, and it deals exclusively with what is right and wrong, in the real sense of those tremendous words, in the innermost sanctuary of life. It is, therefore, a terribly real fact, account for it as we may. Men may form various theories to account for its existence ; they may neglect or oppose it ;

but they can no more get rid of it than they can get rid of themselves.

It witnesses as to the character of conduct, but it extends the definition of conduct over the whole area of the inner life; it gives the lie, therefore, to all moral theories which measure the value, the moral value, of actions by their consequences, for it goes boldly into the sanctuary of *motive* and gives its judgment upon *that*.

Being personal, then, and plunging so fearlessly into the inner recesses of life, it is natural that Conscience should deal, not without characteristic definiteness and suitability, with man in the three departments of his probation. This is what I mean. Man is an animal, but man is also a spirit; he belongs to a material, to an idealistic, to a mystical, to a spiritual, world; the action of his life is conditioned by facts which at first sight seem easy to understand, but which, when we come to think of them, are mysterious and only half-comprehended truths. His life is conditioned here and now by space and time. Are any facts more familiar? Are any ideas more mysterious? What is space? What is time? The moment we try to find definitions, we are lost in mazes of uncertainty; and yet we know a great deal about these mysterious facts, these only half-comprehended ideas. Conscience concerns itself with things in time. It speaks sometimes low, sometimes loud; sometimes bringing a shock of fear; sometimes startling us for the moment, and then withdrawing itself behind the veil, *in* the very moment in which we are living. It will not be silent—though it may have to speak with rapidity, and though we dismiss its verdict with anger—in the pleasant social gathering, in the noisy meeting, in the midst of a heated debate. Swift but sure is the flash of its

lightning-like illumination ; passing, but relentless and exact, is the verdict it records ; and even amidst the pleasantries, or heated excitements, or conventional unrealities of ordinary social life, it acts in Time ; it lays hold of the present, which perhaps we had fondly thought was, if anything could be, all our own. Nor does it neglect the Past. On the contrary, its most terrible and relentless force is felt there. It is a constant effort in fallen human nature to deceive ourselves into imagining that if an act or motive is over and “done with” and ended, especially if we can dismiss it for the most part from our memories, it is no more concern of ours. This is, of course, impossible ; for although our lives are conditioned by time, we ourselves are creatures of eternity, and, being such, motives and actions, which are really expressions of ourselves, must have something of our immortality. Conscience being, as I have said, personal, insists upon this. It may not be possible for it at any moment to keep before us the exact value or seriousness of our actions and motives in the past, but, like a severe and watchful foe, it bides its time ; and then, at unexpected moments, it lights a light more penetrating and searching than the glare of self-deceiving imagination, and compels us to see *the real character of what has been*.

My brothers, this characteristic of Conscience would make it intolerable—has, in fact, before now made it intolerable—were it not for other and relieving revelations which come to us in the Catholic Faith. At this moment, however, we are not concerned with these, but we are concerned with the fact that sooner or later there is within us this terrible power, able to illuminate and show the exact value of motive and action in the past. The accepted proverb, “Conscience makes cowards of us all,” is only an expression

of the wide experience of the human family, that there is this power within every one of us, which insists upon dealing fearlessly with the Past.

And if Conscience grapples with the Past and the Present, it travels boldly into the Future, and, like a forerunner in the path of life's journey, sends us reports to guide us in our conduct. It *warns*; it speaks sometimes like a guardian angel, sometimes like an ominous Cassandra. It seems to imagine what our conduct may possibly be, and what motives may move us in the field of the future which we have not yet traversed; and it tells us, whether we will or not, what they *ought* to be. And it is interesting to remember that its dealings with the future are themselves a very powerful evidence of our immortality and of a future life. We know that we have moral freedom. Two paths are constantly thrown open to us between which to choose. We may, so to speak, "do as we like," or we may "do as we ought." Our condition according as we do one or the other must be—Conscience teaches us—very different. According as a trust is used, so must be the reckoning. This, if anything, Conscience insists upon when it deals with a future. We know, as a matter of experience, that things are not *final* for us, morally speaking, here; and so this very action of Conscience reminds us that, being moral beings, in order to attain to the finality to which it witnesses, our lives must belong to another world. Of all the proofs of immortality and another life—proofs never, of course, absolutely demonstrative, for the subject-matter, from the nature of the case, cannot admit of demonstration—but of all the proofs which point to our immortality, there is none, probably, which is borne in on us with such tremendous force as that which comes from the prophecies and warnings of Conscience in dealing with the future.

III.

Whilst the whole question of Conscience is one of extreme solemnity, it would not be right to forget what I may call its sunny side.

Holy Scripture dwells in many places on this aspect of the subject; but we do not require to go to Holy Scripture to know that there is a real and solid blessing in a good conscience. It is of this that S. John speaks when he says; "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God." It is to this that our Blessed Lord doubtless alludes when He says, "Whosoever cometh to Me and heareth My sayings, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like; he is like unto a man which built a house and digged deep and laid the foundations on a rock; and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded upon a rock." It is this also which S. Paul feels so strongly when he says in the text, that he made efforts "to always have a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men."

But experience teaches us this, and it has been the general feeling of mankind, that as the pangs of an evil conscience are even more terrible than acute bodily pain, so the comfort of a good conscience is a source of the purest and most lasting joy. It is not a matter of mere feeling; in an upright nature, it becomes stronger with increasing years, and in proportion to the sincerity and reality and continuance of our obedience, it brings increasing strength and peace. It has been said, and truly said, that there is no example that we know of in this matter more thorough than S. Paul himself. I may quote from a

great teacher who draws attention to this. "His manner," he says, "of speaking of his own spiritual condition on writing to Timothy, his friend, close on his death, differs from that which he adopted, years before, writing to the whole Church of the Corinthians." His earlier tone was, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway;" and again, "I know nothing against myself, yet am I not hereby justified;" and again, some years later, speaking to the Philippians, "I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth towards those things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of my high calling in Christ Jesus." And is it ever possible to forget those triumphant and pathetic words which, later still, he wrote from Rome, when, alone and longing to see his beloved Timothy—whom in fact he was never to see again—he had his eye fixed, with that quiet manly steadfastness which always characterized him, and in no way detracted from the almost womanly tenderness of that most loving and most fatherly of hearts—with all the intense yearning that was his, to see just once again the son he so dearly loved, he had, I say, his eye fixed upon the end and meanings of his journey of life? "I am now," he cries from the cave beneath the Capitol or from the prison of the Palatine, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to

me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." These glorious words have the ring of a real assurance ; not that fantastical, and theatrical, and unsubstantial, and maudlin "assurance," which has been preached sometimes as a sequel to the preaching of the mental athletics, "believe and be saved." Oh no ! something very different from that ; no unreal nonsense here, no playing fast and loose with the goodness and righteousness of God, or with the reality and dignity of human responsibility. This is an "assurance" wholly different ; there is nothing hysterical or sensational here, but the calm and growing conviction of a serious character who had set himself, from the first, to keep "a conscience void of offence," and consequently has had the splendid reward of a great obedience. For what had he done ? To begin with, he had had a faulty conscience,—faulty, because insufficiently instructed—but so far as he saw, he followed ; so far as he knew, he did ; and it led him right at last, as it leads us all, if we have strength to follow his example. He disciplined and trained it ; he examined it and listened to its verdict ; when new light flashed upon it, he followed the light ; he was a supreme example of that truth upon which I have insisted before now.

"To him that loves the light, a clearer dawn
Shall rise anew ;
And he that does his best, leaves nought undone
That man can do."

For what did it mean in him, what does it mean in us, when we have the testimony of a *bad* conscience or the testimony of a *good* ? Does it not mean this—that we are "rehearsing" the solemn sentence of the last great assize ?

Of course, I know that there are such things as morbid

consciences, that there are natures almost over humble, which fear to listen to the good sentence of Conscience lest they should deceive themselves. These require to be guided, assisted, consoled by the living teachings of the Catholic Church. But on the whole, if we take serious pains with ourselves, if our religious life is to us *the* great reality, if we will not allow ourselves to be seduced by conventional thought or language, by the claims of convenience, or the demands of what is usual, from what we know and feel to be *right*—on the whole, Conscience, if we do wrong, gives us a sharp rebuke, with a twinge of pain reminding us of the possible misery of the lost ; Conscience, if we do right, rehearses to us that moment of unutterable joy, when we may hear, if we will, from the lips of the highest holiness and the most absolute truth, that sentence which we shall then even find it hard to believe, and yet which, please God, we may one day hear and know to be our own—"Well done, good and faithful ; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Ah ! it is worth while in the quiet common things of every day, with that sweetness and brightness that comes to us all, by habitual self-control, by habitual forgetfulness of self—it is worth while for present happiness, for help to others, and in view of a very certain and a very glorious future, to follow S. Paul's example, and "keep a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men."

IV.

There is another fact about Conscience which is of extreme interest—interest, I mean, of course, of a practical, but also of a speculative kind. I have referred to this before, I insist upon it again. It witnesses to a future life.

It witnesses it in a strange way. Conscience, when the soul first begins to sin, is a severe judge and gives a sentence to a heavy penalty; but each time that the soul is brought to its trial, it gets on terms of easier familiarity with the process of the court. We have a wonderful gift of self-absolution. We plead mitigating circumstances with an airy grace, and at last we may succeed, as it has been well said, to such an extent as to contrive "to corrupt the whole procedure, to suborn the judge, and to turn the very chamber of justice into a council-room of guilty conspiracy." In this way, brethren, we may escape for the moment from the retribution of Conscience. Sin becomes habitual; the man hardens himself against the reproofs of his higher being. Conscience is unable to do everything that it ought to do in the way of punishment, and if it stood alone, then the worst of men would escape with complete impunity. Brethren, it does not stand alone. In this case, it points to a Future—it speaks a law of righteousness which has been infringed and which it will not allow the soul to forget, but the entire execution of which it can no longer effect. It reminds us at least that there is a future where the law of righteousness shall be vindicated. Death is no "final discharge;" there is, Conscience at least says this, a righteous judgment beyond the grave. Is it possible, then, I ask, to be too careful of, too faithful towards, too loyal and obedient to Conscience in the right conduct of the journey of life?

V.

It was natural enough that S. Paul, with his clear and sympathetic view of human nature, should speak thus on the subject of Conscience in relation to himself. What he

practised himself was the personal application of the doctrine which he held about others. In speaking of the law which had been given to the Jews, S. Paul taught that it had been—except in its deeper moral aspect—abolished. But he speaks of the law of Conscience, however feeble or liable to mistake, or dimmed with shadow, still so far as it went, God's voice for the heathen world. And when he is speaking about the Jewish converts at Rome, who still clung to all sorts of Jewish customs—keeping festivals of the Jewish Church,—he recommends forbearance and brotherly love towards them on the part of others. About them there was no touch of Gnostic heresy which he had condemned elsewhere. Their fault was an excessive scrupulosity ; but he advises that in these matters one was not to judge another nor charge another with sin, for that no one Christian was lord over another, but all were the servants of God ; and it was the duty of each to do what he felt to be pleasing to God, in accordance with the amount of light and knowledge which he possessed. If a man acted in opposition to his conviction of what was right, for him such action was sin. Conscience, then, according to the teaching of the Apostle, though it might make a mistake in the practical application of a truth or principle, so far as it goes, must be a law binding upon each. It is it which records its judgment of the conduct of its possessor. It pronounces authoritatively that some things are in themselves right, and good, and just ; and others in themselves evil, unjust, and wrong. It behaves in a magisterial manner, and approves or condemns with a voice of authority.

It is a serious thing, therefore, to remember that it may be forcibly stopped, and that its strength is by no means

always equal to the strength of appetites and passions which find it an inconvenient monitor, and which it judges with unhesitating determination. "To preside and govern, from the very economy and constitution of man," says one of the greatest of English theologians, "belongs to it. Had it strength, as it has right; had it power, as it has manifest authority, it would absolutely govern the world."¹

That it does not govern the world, my brothers, is too sadly plain. We all acknowledge how highly we esteem a conscientious man; and yet a "political conscience," a "commercial conscience," and, to use a phrase bandied about in quite recent times—whether justly or unjustly, and certainly unjustly towards some good men,—a "nonconformist conscience," is a very different thing from what we understand by the conscience of a good Christian.

VI.

It is our duty, then, to care for our Conscience.

(1) It should be carefully instructed. It is important for this purpose, from earliest days, to teach the young the meaning and force of moral principles. It is important also to teach them the truths of the Catholic Faith, to teach them in fact the Catechism. Truth is not the easiest thing in the world; in order to see it with clear eye, and to follow it with ready mind, we need an *instructed* Conscience.

(2) It is our duty to *appeal to* Conscience. In the training of the young, the wakening of the Conscience, the putting it on the alert, the teaching it to exercise its legitimate authority, depends very much, we may be well assured, on the care taken by parents or teachers, not to exercise

¹ Bishop Butler.

capriciously or vexatiously their rightful power, but to make the exercise of their authority be felt to re-echo with a right ring to the authority of the Conscience within.

(3) It is also an important duty to *examine* the Conscience. It will play the part of a witness as well as of a judge, and if we "exercise" it, and if we listen to it in a serious, respectful temper, it will let us know with sufficient distinctness how far we are walking, how far we are failing to walk, according to the rule and law of God's commandments. It is true that if that were all a Christian could do, then Conscience would do little else for us in the journey of life than terrify and condemn; but no Christian can forget that, like the Law in the Jewish Church, so Conscience is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. The whole of the penitential system of the Church; the comfort of Confession and Absolution, that is, the seeking for, and application of, the Precious Blood;—these at once use Conscience in its rightful office, and also relieve the soul of the burden which it must lay upon it.

Blessed are they who "exercise" themselves like the Apostle to "have always a conscience void of offence!" blessed, who listen in time to its warnings, and try to direct their footsteps in accordance with its witness; these will have "songs in the night," will be advancing towards "Mount Zion . . . and flowing together for the goodness of the Lord, where they shall not sorrow any more at all!" But blessed also they who, when accused by Conscience, do not disregard the warning, but bring the burden of their sin, and lay it at the feet of Christ.

A MANLY RELIGION.

SERMON VI.

A MANLY RELIGION.

“Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek to know the Lord: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you.”—ISA. li. 1, 2.

FROM time to time in life it is good for us all consciously, earnestly, to refer to fixed standards. Half the miseries of life, half the failures of character, come from the vagueness with which men allow themselves to move along their journey, without careful reference to settled landmarks—come from the want of the upward look, the recurring and penetrating glance towards that which truly can be trusted.

There are few things more desirable for all of us—may I say it, especially desirable in this age?—than a manly religion. A religion, I mean, which is no mere sentiment; which may enlist but does not rest upon feeling; which can use music or poetry, and awaken and employ the æsthetic sentiment, but *depends* upon something far deeper, and is the possessor of moral backbone. We each of us need a religion which can be to us of the strongest and most vital power; which sways and guides in the last resort, when we reach ultimate decisions; which, instead of being the fringe

of the garment of life, is the marrow or nerve of life itself; which can be "strongest on the longest day," and remain to warn and comfort and support when other subjects which have commanded our attention have bowed themselves out and taken a long farewell. We need, if life's journey is to be bravely faced and nobly carried to its close, a manly religion.

You may say, and rightly, there is for all of us the Catholic Faith. True, the full revelation of God's nature and man's destiny, and the relation of man to God, is before us all in the teaching of the Church. But it is one thing to gaze on a beautiful picture; another to carry a loved image in the heart. It is one thing to learn that there are facts of importance in the realm of spirit; another to appropriate them to ourselves, and make them guides in our journey and springs of our activity. Religion, as it finally tells upon life and character, is a personal matter. So to appropriate the great facts of revelation as to make them of force for restraining in times of temptation, and stimulating in hours of lethargy, and comforting and brightening when the dark clouds come, so as to build up a vigorous character, true, brave, humble, strong, and Christ-like;—*this* is to have a manly religion.

I.

Now, viewed from one point of view—of course only partial can be our statement, of course we can only think of one point at a time—this result so needed depends upon the *habit* of referring in life to fixed subjects of reference. Principle at all times is like a guide-post on an untravelled track, like a compass in an unvisited sea, like a mountain-

peak piercing the clouds to act as a landmark in an unknown country. Principle is unchanging fundamental truth, which, amidst the many fluctuations of temporary facts, the vicissitudes of varying circumstances, is *always* applicable and can never alter. But there are whole classes of facts supplied by the past, a reference to which provides us with forms of principles. To live at random, if we have anything that can be called a religion at all, is to have a religion pleasing in the sunshine, useless in the storm. To live by habitual reference to truths of final importance, and from these more and more to be gathering *principles* into ourselves, is, so far forth, to have a manly religion.

“ Shall life go wandering on its way
With no clear thought of where it tend,
Like wind-driven leaf or storm-swept spray,
And yet to end, so soon to end ? ”

II.

Something of this sort would be in the mind of the greatest of the prophets as he wrote the striking words of the text. Before him he saw the vision of his people wandering at random, without a solid and strong thought of the true meaning and guiding principles of life. Some seemed to think little or nothing of the vast possessions placed at their disposal in the treasures of Divine revelation committed to them, and in the possessions peculiarly theirs in a unique historic past. They were “ kindling their own fire,” and then, when they might have moved in the region of the sun-dawn, “ walking in the light of the sparks which they had kindled.” Others were meaning well, yet doing badly ; not wholly ignoring the possessions of the past

revelation, yet with no ready reference to what they *meant*, with no effort for personal application of the principles they supplied. Isaiah was a politician, an historian, and a prophet. As a politician, he felt the fatal error of attempting, in guiding the destinies of a people, to neglect the traditions of its past ; as an historian, he was familiar with the accumulated stores of experience, which supplied, to those who chose to use them, teachings, for practical purposes, of priceless value ; as a prophet, he could see beyond the distant hills and penetrate into the secrets of the future. More : he had grasped truth *in* his own soul, and was able to express forcibly, for the use of others, all that he had grasped. In every capacity, and looking with sorrow at the mistakes of his people,—in every capacity, and realizing the need of religion, and religion of a practical and personal character, he would have the men whom primarily he addressed *refer* by habit to lessons which had been left them ; he would have them, in view of present perplexities and future needs, listen with vigorous attention to an appeal from their past.

“Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek to know the Lord : look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you.”

II.

And here, brethren, it is to be noted that in the mind of the prophet, any men who have a serious sense of life ; any who have at all awakened to the pathetic fact that the journey of our probation can be trodden by each of us once and no more ; any, consequently, who are at all alive to the

seriousness of opportunity—which may be used, which may be lost; any who are at all quickened into a sense of responsibility, *must* acknowledge that the chief business of a wise and practical man is to “follow after righteousness,” to “seek to know the Lord.”

It is startling, as we look at the world, to notice how very different from the prophet's estimate appear to be the estimate of many of us as to the main meaning of life. Can it be, we ask, that, in view of the spectacle before us, such is the true meaning of the efforts of men? In this Babel of voices, in the clatter of commercial enterprise, in the struggle for self-advancement, in the hurry of competition, in the greedy pursuit of gain, in the feverish efforts for legislative change, in all the dinning noise of life's confused and dazing struggle, in the market-place, in the manufactory, in the railway, in the senate, even in the clash of the machinery of ecclesiastical energy, is “righteousness,” is “the knowledge of the Lord,” the main aim of human enterprise?

We know what is the sad and immediate and too true answer. It is not. Man is a fallen being, and his “fall” is no mere *doctrine*. In his evident struggle for something short of his final object, his “fall” is seen to be a *fact*.

And yet we must be careful not to go too far. God has “not left Himself without witness.” So great is man, amidst all his moral and spiritual calamities, he cannot always forget the meaning of his destiny. There *must* be immediate objects on which human energy is forced to expend itself; and yet, once wakened to the few plain certainties of life, to those conditions which no advance of civilization can change—God, Death, Eternity—men learn to find, behind all other objects which tend too much to

engross their attention, that "righteousness" and "the knowledge of the Lord" are objects not lightly to be put aside or forgotten by immortal man.

Great thoughts like this present themselves, at least in fits and starts, to the minds of men. But a truly religious character is not built up by "fits and starts." What we want, dear friends, is a lasting, a forcible, a manly religion; and this, at least, is aided by the habit of reference to great truths which concern us all. "Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek to know the Lord: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you."

III.

To follow the prophet's example, the same sort of appeal may be made to ourselves. In the life of man, dear friends, there are various platforms, so to speak, of interior experience; and first there is the platform of *the moral life*. Is there any help to us, in this connection, by an appeal to the past? My brethren, unquestionably there is. There are—to quote the substance, if not the words, of a great teacher¹—there are certain qualities and endowments which are peculiarly the heritage of our race. Not that they cannot be found in *individuals* belonging to other races, but that among ourselves they are widely noticed, excite admiration, and are recognized as being specially deserving of holding a high place in our esteem. This is seen in clearness, these qualities are noticed in their purity and simplicity, by an appeal to the past.

¹ The late R. W. Church, "Influence of Christianity on National Character."

The same graceful historian and great teacher reminds us that when the Roman Empire was tottering towards its fall, there appeared in the forests of Northern Europe certain hordes of barbarians, who caused a languid interest to the Roman moralists, and a passing anxiety to the statesmen of the Empire. When they became seriously troublesome the Roman legions were sent to deal with them, and it was expected that trouble from such quarters could not last long. The Empire had made a grave mistake. The wild barbarians of these northern wastes, under the consummate generalship of Arminius, sent the legions of Varus to an unpitied destruction. Rome staggered at the greatness of the catastrophe; but the record left by Tacitus and the ninth chapter of Gibbon throws light upon the real sources of strength in these triumphant tribes, which it is well for us not to disregard.

We learn, my friends, that these men revered the virtue of truth—by which we mean, not only the “search after what is true, and the speaking of what is known or believed to be true, but the regard generally for what is real, substantial, genuine, solid; . . . the taste for plainness and simplicity of life and manner and speech; the strong sense of justice—large, unflinching, consistent; the power and will to be fair to a strong opponent; the impatience of affectation and pretence; the dislike of over-statement and exaggeration,” and a real moral indignation at all forms of sham.

They valued, we are told, the virtue of manliness—by which is meant those virtues which “belong to a serious estimate of the uses, the capacities, the call of human life; the duty of hard work; the value and jealousy for true liberty; independence of soul; deep sense of responsibility, and strength not to shrink from it; steadiness, endurance, per-

severance ; the power of sustaining cheerfully disappointment and defeat ; the temper, not to make much of trifles, whether vexations or pleasures ; the great self-commanding power which we call moral courage, which makes a man, who knows and measures all that his decision involves, not afraid to be alone against numbers."

They valued, it is said, "the virtues having relation to law, the readiness to submit private interest and individual wishes to the control of public authority," to postpone the interests and desires of the individual to the needs and decisions of all.

They valued the virtues of purity. The virtues which lead men to respect their own souls and bodies, and therefore the bodies and souls of others ; which make friendship noble and enduring, and love ennobling and strong ; which feed the fire of true affection between friend and friend, between lover and lover, between child and parent, and parent and child ; out of which have been created those "schools of goodness"—English homes.

I do not mean that, in all their fulness and breadth and final development, these glorious forces of strength were at once visible in the barbarian invaders of the Empire ; but in them, in some measure at least, they were to be noticed, and they attracted attention ; in fuller or in smaller measure, there they were.

My brethren, from the loins of these men *we* are sprung. Is it our endeavour, amidst the devious windings of this mortal life, amidst the many temptations which spring upon us to withstand our progress, or to turn us from the way of duty, to keep before us the superior value of the virtue of truth ? Some one says, and truly, that "confidence is the cement of society." To him who gives it, it is a real venture ;

to him who receives, a deep responsibility. Departure from truth is often nothing short of a base betrayal. But more, to play fast and loose with truth is to give a volcanic shock to our moral nature. All virtues may be said to be varying forms of truth. Truth in motive, thought, word, and act is the fundamental and necessary condition of a strong and noble character. So may it be said of the other virtues named already, and especially of the last—of that purity which clears the eye of materialistic mists, and enables the soul to “see God.”

Ah ! when we look around at the existing conditions of our political, our social, our commercial, even our religious lives, do we not feel how needful it is, again and again, to be on our guard ; to cultivate an *habitual* reference to such necessary and such ennobling virtues ; to see to it that, behind the passing incidents of the moment, the *springs* of action are pure and not poisoned ; to take care that, amidst whatever outward successes, we are not defeated in the moral life ?

“Look,” ye children of a race so rich in moral endowments ; “look,” ye later sons of noble sires ; “look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you.”

IV.

“Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.”

Look, look unto the Catholic Church. Ye are the children of the Church ; ye are members of that Body of the Lord.

The Church ! she has had a strange and chequered life.

She began in a handful of "unlearned and ignorant men," and she spread through all ranks of society. She had her times of terrible suffering and severe persecution, but also of intense love and brotherly fellowship and spiritual joy. The forces of evil were arrayed against her, but not "a weapon forged" against her could "prosper." She emerged from the catacombs stronger for her sorrow, and took her place in the councils of kings. She had her struggles with unbelievers and non-believers for the truth, as she had had her struggles with persecutors for her life, and again she had victory. She had days of terrible darkness, when all seemed gone. When men proclaimed her death and made ready to attend her funeral, lo! on a sudden she rose, like her Master on the Easter morning, with new life and fresh vigour, "conquering and to conquer." She was the guardian of learning when the world was dark and rude. She was the protector of the helpless, when might, in the world, was the measure of right. She inspired the artist, and trained the historian, and guided the statesman. Her ends and objects were other than the mere advances of civilization, but civilization she fostered and advanced.

She has made great mistakes, she has had terrible quarrels in her family, for is she not human as well as divine? But, in spite of mistakes and notwithstanding quarrels, her great work has gone on. She has been at home in the palace and at home in the cottage; she has known how to be rough and how to be refined; she has used the serious, simple words of the English Prayer-book in the simplest fashion, and she has employed the strains of stateliest music, and not denied to the worship of God a ceremonial more stately than the ceremonial of the courts of kings. She has made all things serve her. She has

made use of the exigencies of politicians, and the enterprise of explorers, and the competitions of commerce, and the affectionate intercourse of friends, to carry out her mission and advance her work. She has been a support and consolation by the bed of suffering; she has stood as a comforter by the open grave; she has had a kind and helpful word in the day of anxiety and trouble, and she has not neglected to take her share in the joys of the marriage morning.

But three things expressly and unflinchingly she has insisted upon to her children. "Put God *first*," she has ever said. Make Him your first beginning and your last end, *the* Object of thought and affection, *the* governing Principle of life. And then, "Take to heart the really greatest trouble, the one and chief calamity. Not poverty; it may become a blessing. Not sickness; it may discipline the soul and ennoble the character. Not failure of hopes or loss of friends; even these, though full of sorrow, may lift man to higher things. But sin—the wilful resistance to the will of the All-Holy; sin, with its energetic and terrible consequences; sin, carrying always with it some form of death; sin, which no man can undo, which has needed so mysterious a transaction in the eternal world as the sacrifice of the Son of God;—sin—*this* is the master evil; settle it in your hearts that it is." And then she has added, "With God before you and sin gripping you, you need a Saviour; and One is come. Learn, then, the common-sense religion taught you by the Catholic Church; learn how to *use* your Saviour. Your attitude must be one of earnestness and penitence. Realize your place in the family; use your privileges; be faithful in prayer, diligent in the using of sacraments. Being a sinner,

a sinner with a Saviour, learn the power of penitence ; be often upon your knees."

The greatness and holiness of God ; the seriousness of sin ; the tenderness of a Saviour's love, and the power of faith and penitence in using the gifts of the Saviour ;—these things, amidst all the vicissitudes of her changeful history, have been kept before the minds of men by the Christian Church. Ye are the children of the Church, dear friends. In the course of your life's journey, oh ! let these things never be forgotten. "Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you."

V.

"Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn." Ah ! my brothers, there is the personal spiritual life which must never be forgotten. There is that inner world of thought, and feeling, and aspiration, and resolve. There is the lowly soul which needs personal contact with a personal object of affection, the loving heart which needs a heart to beat true to itself. Here the appeal may be heard. Here it is of lasting value. You would not allow me to leave you without a sense of being wronged ; my own conscience would not acquit me of a failure in using a great opportunity, unless I added, "Look unto the Rock of Ages ; look, look unto Christ."

There can be no doubt that, for a practical and manly religion, we need an *ideal*. The philosophy of the moment calls itself *realism* ; it is in fact materialistic. The philosophy which teaches men to deal only with phenomena, instead of looking below the surface and examining the

nature of things ; which closes the eye to the serious and religious significance of nature, and the deep and final nature of man ;—this is the danger of the day. It turns politics into an exciting game, where the sharpest trickster, and who can best deceive the people, may hope to win ; it corrupts and defiles the tone of current literature ; it induces in veracity in journalism ; it makes a clean sweep of the moral obligation of holy marriage, and in doing so tends to corrupt and then destroy the home. It substitutes the empty speculations and insolent sneers of scientists for the solemn certainties and the words of love and persuasion of the Christian Religion. If it *possesses* a soul, it empties it of the sense of its high dignity, and closes its eyes to the real world to which our higher life belongs.

No life can be nobly lived, no work can be nobly done, without being in some sense under the sway of the ideal. Certainly, for a noble and manly religion, we need the ideal. We need a faultless picture ; we need a blessed memory.

Now, this is before us in Christ.

Whatever men have believed or disbelieved about our Master, they have not been able to close their eyes, they have not been able to shut their minds, against His unique elevation of character. He stood, to speak humanly, a head and shoulders above the men of His time, and yet understood and touched them and others as man has never done before. He lived among the people, and loved them and taught them ; but He never sought their suffrages or cared for their applause. To the hardened and self-willed He spoke with fearless and incisive rebuke ; to the wayworn and weary, the miserable and the sinful, He had words of

comfort and promises of unexpected tenderness. He was kind to the lost woman, He attracted the little children ; He opened His heart to the enthusiasms of young men, and won them to follow Him with completeness of devotion. The artificial barriers which we are so apt to erect between ourselves and our fellows had no meaning for Him. Largeness, generosity, graciousness, combined with an unexampled moral vigour,—these marked that wonderful, that beautiful, that pathetic, life.

If we dare to select among characteristics so various and so beautiful as were His, we are struck, perhaps, most of all by His simplicity and His self-sacrifice. Simplicity ! He Himself said, “ If thine eye be single, thy whole body is full of light.” And He was a living Example of His teaching. Never posed in an attitude ; never studied to produce an effect ; never diplomatized, or “ managed,” or played a part. Joined to consummate wisdom and a deep knowledge of men, there was that ready and strong straightforwardness which arises from real strength and a single aim. He lived a life filled with the business and cares of time, as His own age and place brought them to Him, but with a temper of greatness wholly of eternity. And then, beyond that, men saw fully for the first time in Him the meaning of an exalted self-sacrifice. It was a new, it was a strange thing, in a world so sunk in corruption, so overwhelmed with selfishness, for men to be brought face to face with such complete self-sacrifice. It was a new, it was a strange thing, for a society so naturally narrow as Judaism, so unnaturally narrowed by cliques and subdivisions, by convention, and traditions, as the society of His time, to be brought face to face with One Who did not merely *teach* that He valued, but *really* valued man as man. It

has been well said of Him that "reason did not, as it so often does with the clearest and ablest of the sons of man, stop in itself ; it passed over into the sphere of the affections, and kindled into the manifold forms in which the play of the living heart shows itself." He showed large consideration. He compassionated the sorrow-laden, He consoled the broken-hearted, He made generous allowance for the difficulties of different positions and different states of mind. He loved with special tenderness those who specially drew out His affections or responded to them, but He had a large and generous love for all. He would have it that men were His *brethren*, and He was always pointing them to the perfection of the Father of them all, as their Standard of ambition. His longing was beyond anything else "that the love wherewith" His Father had loved Him might "be in them and" He "in them ;" and if, accordingly, He left them a new commandment, namely, that they should love one another, He did more. He showed, by His self-sacrificing and humble and generous life and character, exactly what that commandment meant. Is it not of priceless value if, in a world so powerful in confusing our moral sympathies ; if, with hearts which so constantly betray and lead us wrong, the Christian religion supplies us with such a splendid memory, and such an exalted and yet possible Ideal ?

For we must never forget the truth that a *character*, if it be really great, furnishes an example which may be followed in times and under conditions far enough removed from those in which it first appeared. It is no vain thing, then, it is no piece of empty rhetoric, to tell you that a manly religion, a religion which draws out both your strength and your tenderness, and lifts you above the petty and narrowing influences to which in life we are all too

likely to succumb, must be a religion which keeps your eye fixed upon Christ.

But if a memory and an ideal are needed, much more do we need the power of an abiding presence. It is the promise of our Master that He will abide with His Church to the end. It is His high prerogative, and it is our chiefest blessing, that He can make Himself an inward Gift, that He can dwell *in* the soul of His child. To be a living member of the Church is to be saved, because it is to be a living part of His Body. And if any be a living member, Christ dwells in him and he in Christ. Let no man say that this is impossible, that this is moonshine, that this is the language of poetry, of metaphor, of dream. It is nothing of the kind. How do you know what is and what is not possible? It is the language of hasty shallowness to decide on the possible or impossible in the spiritual life of man. 'This is the Christian revelation of the way in which man is to be saved; the way in which his wounds are to be healed, and his sorrows assuaged, and his sins forgiven, and his selfishness cured, and his character remade—union, union with Christ. And the Christian religion has abundant evidence at its disposal to prove that its assertions in this matter are not lightly to be put aside. Anyhow, make more serious trial yourselves of such a revelation, and you will, gradually at least, be convinced of its truth. Not all in a moment, not till after many moments; not all at once, not till after many ups and downs, and failings, and even falls, perhaps, will you succeed in conquering what is un-Christlike, in pursuing steadily what you know to be according to His will. Only try, and try again; be not dashed by disaster, nor cowed by failure, nor unduly depressed by the want of immediate success. The journey of life has its rough places; the

battle of life has its backward and forward swayings of defeat and victory. But one thing is certain—if the aim be high, and if you refuse to allow your eye permanently to rest upon false ideals, or your heart permanently to look for strength whence no lasting strength can come; but if, on the contrary, you seek steadily for strength from the living, present Saviour, and keep your eye—say what men may—upon the ideal presented by His life, victory must be yours. “Look,” then, “look to the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you.” Look at the high moral virtues which God has given as an endowment to your race; look at the solemn witness of the Church of which you are members; look, above all, look unto Christ.

V.

This is the secret of a manly religion—a religion made up of no shallow sentiment or passing feeling, but a religion which gives play to our warmest affections, and calls into activity our most vigorous energies. And what shall I say more? Just these three closing forms of advice which arise from the subject before us.

(1) Learn, I beseech you, to value the science of goodness, as the most valuable subject for study and attainment that can possibly be placed before any man. Whatever else you desire to advance in, in whatever other department of human activity you may be proficient, remember that no gifts and no attainments of any other kind will make up for a deficiency in this; and practically thus to remember will help you to act in religion as a brave man should.

(2) And, again, let it never be forgotten that, to gain this

proficiency, you need, and you must resort to, the great Teacher. You will want the strength of Christ. How can your bound, or perverted, or weakened wills strike out unaided for so great a thing as the goodness which is *the* characteristic of God? Well, with faith and perseverance in prayer, in sacraments, in the interior intercourse of your spirit with His living Spirit, your wills can be freed and directed and strengthened, and you can fare forth manfully in the strength of Christ.

(3) And, lastly, if it be so, take care that your moral response to His assistance be clear and complete. Rising above the depressing influences which are around us all, strive to live, to breathe, in the atmosphere created by Him. Learn some measure of self-sacrifice. Live a loving life. "See that ye love one another." "For love is of God; and he that loveth dwelleth in God, and knoweth God; for God is Love."

Ah! we may make many mistakes, and there may be many slips and failures, but humbly we may hope that if it is ours thus to strive for a manly religion, our journey of life will not be without some blessed consequences; our work, though hidden and small, will have about it a touch of eternity; we shall be allowed to do our part in bringing about that blessed consummation, when "the kingdoms of this world" shall "become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ."

THE GREAT CONTRAST.

SERMON VII.

THE GREAT CONTRAST.

“All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withereth, the flower thereof falleth away : but the Word of the Lord endureth for ever.”—1 PET. i. 24, 25.

ONE striking witness to the Divine Authority of Holy Scripture is this : that it is always true to human nature, faithful in its dealings with the critical and prominent feature of man's journey of life. It has, accordingly, its side of severity and its counsels of comfort : it has its darker patches and its streaks of sunshine ; it has its poetry and its prose. Here is an example of the poetry, tender and touching, dealing with the pathetic facts of human struggle, and carrying the mind above the passing sorrow to higher things.

Like the sway and swell of Christmas bells across the snow, like mournful music heard across the hurrying waves, like the haunting refrain of an enchanting song which refuses to be forgotten, come the words of this Apostle of human feeling chastened by penitence and sorrow—“All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withereth, the flower thereof falleth.”

I.

S. Peter is writing to the scattered congregations of the Lesser Asia. He is writing to comfort, to stimulate, to encourage. These poor struggling bands of Christians, surrounded by vast and unsympathetic heathen populations, needed all the assistance which could be given them by apostolic strength and insight and enthusiasm.

S. Peter has his feet on the track of the greatest of the prophets. And just as the children of captive Israel must have found it hard to think of the vast Babylonian power which held them as anything but invincible; just as the spectacle of the immense material splendours of that ancient empire of palaces and temples must have overwhelmed their imagination, and therefore it was necessary for the prophet, gazing forward through these years of trial and sorrow, to leave them a certain assurance that all this earthly splendour was as passing as the withering grass or the fading flower, so it was now.

Imagination is the haunt of apprehension, the home of baseless fears. The scattered Christians in Asia must have had their imagination deeply impressed by the vastness and power of that tremendous empire which surrounded them, and which held them and their religion so cheap. It was a bold thing and a needful thing that the Apostle, with the pathetic language of a poet, of a prophet, should help them to look facts fearlessly in the face; should help them to go below the surface; should rid them of delusions born of imaginative impressions; should assist them to feel that appearances are one thing and realities quite another; should borrow from Nature in her weakest and saddest moments an image to express, and alone fitted adequately

to express, the passing character of mere human power. And so S. Peter has in his mind and on his lips great and striking contrasts, and they reach their climax in the text.

Brethren, if we are nobly and wisely to travel the journey of life ; if we are to call out the needed sunshine when the day is cloudy ; if we are to find the required strength when our hearts are weak and purposes unsure ; if we are to be of help to others in their day of struggle and prepare with calmness for "the valley of the shadow ;" then, deep in our hearts must be fixed the sense of the great contrast, and habitually must our wills be set on the right side. Life brings it home to us, experience insists upon it ; but God has long been teaching it, and one—and not the least—office of the Christian Church has been and is to bear witness to it—the contrast not exactly between the apparent and the real, but rather between what is fleeting and what lasts, between the passing and the permanent, between the withering grass and the enduring Word.

II.

"All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass." Here, then, under the pathetic image of the withering grass and the fading flower, the Apostle illustrates the passing character of that group of phenomena which he characterizes as—man and his glory.

"The glory of man !" When an expression like this challenges our attention, we feel—do we not?—that we are face to face with one of those phrases which we commonly use, which "go without saying," which take their place in our common parlance and are easily accepted without serious examination, but which, none the less, if we are to lay the

apostolic meaning deeply to heart, we require to decipher or even to dissect. "The glory of man!" My brethren, what is "glory"?

When we stand on a headland some autumn evening and watch, under the lashes of the angry wind, the changeful agonies of the seething sea; when the canopy of gloom changes gradually in form and colour, swept to the north-east by the increasing gale, and shot through and through with glittering shafts of sunset brilliance; when the mighty ramparts and bastions which seem to mark some unseen city in the clouds are all aglow with fire, and the heavy waves which form the foreground become less like illuminated water and more like molten gold; when sea and sky, when clouds and waters together form a harmony of splendour, startling, threatening, beautiful, but full of awe;—that strange something in us which enables man to give life to Nature, that whisper of our own immortality which we can convey to cloud and sea, wakens within us with redoubled force, and we exclaim, "This is glorious!"

Or you wander, in a summer holiday, to Antwerp, to Amsterdam, to Freiburg, to Cologne; or, further off, you have put your foot on Sicily. Here are memories and records of Teutonic strength and Saracenic genius. Here your Norman forefathers have left their mark; here, too, the genius of the earlier Greeks has planted, it may be, a mixed record, but a record still. Is it Girgenti with its temples? or Taormina with its views of ruined amphitheatre or, fairer still, its distant landscape of mountain and of sea? Is it Palermo with its Conca d'Oro, its chapel with sheets of mosaic illuminating the Bible stories, or its Duomo with the solemn scene of the tombs of the kings? Cathedral, temple, amphitheatre, smiling city, or solemn and touching

church—in one or another some flash of man's genius passes before you, or some record of a stately or religious past, and gazing in these thoughtful moments on the scene, "This," you say—"this is glorious!"

Or sit for an hour in Dresden and watch "the San Sisto." The colour, the dignity, the heavenly sentiment, all are moving; but when the eye of the Mother impels you for a moment to gaze on the Divine Son, and then carries you far, far away to the thought of His unbeginning eternity, struck by these fair and fruitful thoughts, and realizing the force of that inspiring power, "This," you say—"this is glorious!"

Or, sitting by your own fireside, lifted out of the cares and frets, the worries and perplexities of daily life, by some stanza of a real poet—a Dante, a Shakespeare, a Browning; feeling how truth and genius can illuminate the common things, or help you to stand above the degrading pettinesses of every day, you lay your work down with a sigh of gratitude and say, "This is glorious!"

Or even, when in narrow circles of life and among homely things, in ways and places where genius does not enter and culture finds no home; where you notice some simple loving acts which find no historian, some strong self-sacrifice, or pure and tender pity, or self-denying sympathy which blooms so beautiful and looks for no self-advertisement; waking to true beauty at its height, with conscience aroused to feel the perfections of real goodness, "This," you say, with bowed head and reverent homage—"this is glorious!"

Ah! always and everywhere it is beauty which has the power to move the sensibilities and the "thoughts of the heart" of man; it is the fitness and harmony of the parts which constitute the beauty; but raise it—to use a phrase of

mathematics—raise it “to the highest power,” let it have that touch of mysterious life, that thrill of electric force, which is pre-eminently capable of making our very being vibrate with an astonishment of joy—this, then, this is “glory.”

III.

The glory of man ! Yes, man, in many departments of his wide-reaching activity, has the glory which thrills and excites him in this mortal life.

There is, for instance, his glory in relation to nature. How marvellous have been at once the discoveries, and then the consequent achievements, in the fields of science ! Men for ages enjoyed the beneficent power of the sunlight. In this age they are able, by means of the solar spectrum, to know the very material of the sun. Space has been conquered ; Time almost reduced to obedience. Nature, for many, has ceased to be so full of poetry, of pathos or terror. By understanding her and obeying her, men have made her a useful servant, a carrier, a messenger, if not a friend. And the Church of Christ does not forbid sympathy or withhold thankfulness for such achievements as these. She ventures to point out, indeed, that some of the hasty and overbearing conclusions of science are to be received with caution. Dogmatism in matters not of direct revelation is always a proof of temerity ; and science, like the young and inexperienced, has allowed herself too often a foolish dogmatism, which has not seldom led to foolish superstition. Still the discoveries of science are among the glories of man.

The glory of man ! Think again of the development of those arts and inventions, side by side with a more enlightened social sentiment, which have made this scene of sense and

time more suitable, less painful, to man as a passing home ! We are not foolish if these are viewed as among God's gifts, from Whom all good gifts and all perfect gifts surely come. We are only foolish if we view them as the ultimate objects of ambition, and the final satisfaction of an immortal creature. These, too, cannot fail to be remembered when we talk of the glory of man !

Or think of the beauties of art, the sweet songs of sweet singers, the entrancing tones of music, the triumphs of architecture, or the development of principles of loyalty to love and duty which have created or guided the immeasurable blessings of a civilized society and a Christian home. The mind has only to rest for a moment on any of these very real blessings to feel how real, how attractive, is "the glory of man" !

And yet the moment that we are tempted—and is it not the great temptation?—to make these or any of these our ultimate objects of desire, two answers to such a temptation rise before us, unanswerably, unutterably serious. Would that we laid them to heart in time !

The first answer is—God. *If* there be a God, *since* there *is* a God—One Who comprehends all and is comprehended of none ; on Whose will depends all that vast system of things which we call nature ; Who guides at once the place and courses of a thousand worlds, and Who sustains the beating of the pulse, and regulates or stops the throbbing of the human heart ; Whose will is all powerful as it is all good ; Who, out of the abundance of His everlasting love, has called His intelligent creatures into being to share so many of His attributes, and, if they will, to enjoy the sunshine of His presence—He must be to these creatures a Being not to be ignored. No course of life, no object of ambition, no gift

however beautiful, no "glory" however transcendent, can be the final aim and essential joy of the creature, unless He is taken account of in such enjoyment, unless He in the heart of the creature reigns supreme. No! As life's journey goes on, no matter what be the benefits and blessings so richly offered the traveller on his way toward eternity, he may not choose any as being his *real* aim and the absorbing idol of his affection, apart from God.

And if it be contended that "the glory of man" in any of its many forms will suffice to satisfy the craving of an undying creature, another answer to traverse such contention is—Death.

There are many statements we may doubt, there are many propositions we may traverse with reasonable scepticism. There is one that cannot be doubted, there is one unquestionable and solemn certainty; certainly we must die. Now, if death be the close of mortal probation; if the journey of life as far as it is conditioned by sense and time, find its close in the grave, it is obvious that that part of man which, however trained in sense and time, survives them both, ought to possess itself, as its really valuable possession, above all of that which cannot be affected by the catastrophe of death.

Is this the case with what is called by the Apostle "the glory of man"? Plainly it is not. However splendid be the gifts of civilization, however fruitful and useful the discoveries of science and the inventions of mechanical ingenuity, however much our admiration is justly won by the varied and striking spectacle presented to us in the modern world, still—just as we act in proportion to our higher nature—our thoughts go far beyond it, and we are sure that, however beautiful, however touching, however

excellent for its own purposes much of it is, it must fade from our sight and sink below our horizon when we come to die. We may have had great successes ourselves, or been witness to them in others; we may have been delighted with the rich gifts of a time so abundant in possessions and opportunities as that in which our lot is cast; but in serious moments, and when the hurry of life will allow us to be thoughtful, we cannot close our eyes to the fact that, with all our many blessings, with all our intoxicating discoveries, the main conditions of the journey of life have not changed. There is still the mystery of bodily pain; there is still the darker mystery of moral evil; there are still disappointed hopes and broken hearts; and, still before us all—

“Black-stoled, black-hooded like a dream,”

there is the inexorable form of death. If we are to make anything our own in so real a sense that it may be ours for ever, it must be something more than that which death can touch; it must be something more than the “glory of man.”

“All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withereth, the flower thereof falleth away.”

IV.

Ah! brethren, we seem to have drifted into a region of gloomy thought. Is not this the voice of a hopeless pessimism? Is not this a realm of morbid musing, scarcely likely to supply invigorating breezes to brace us for the journey of life? No, it is not. The clouds, indeed, are heavy on the horizon. The wind is in the south-west; the

storm is raging; the waves are rising in fury, but they are leaden-coloured and presaging doom. True? Nay, we are mistaken. The wind is falling; it sinks almost to silence; it has veered round. Again, it begins to sing so low, so low, among the grasses at our feet; it is rising to a gale, it will soon have the power of storm, but the storm is breaking the clouds to pieces, and the bastions of blackness along the horizon are being illuminated with a light from a glory beyond. The ship will not be driven on the breakers; she is making with vigour for the open sea. Much that we have around us is passing, but, as well as the passing, there is also the permanent. The "glory of man" is "as the flower of the grass." Yes! but "the Word of the Lord abideth for ever."

The Word of the Lord! What do we mean by the Word of the Lord? When we speak of the word of a man, we mean his very thought, clothed in appropriate garb and equipped with suitable equipments to enable it to pass from mind to mind. When we speak of the Word of the Lord, we mean the very thought of the living God, sent forth to reach the mind and to dwell in the heart and to become part of the life of His creature; and as it comes from the Infinite, the Eternal, it partakes of His truth, His Eternity, His Infinity. By it man knows God, and "this is life eternal," this is a permanent possession, this is a lasting heritage, "to know Thee, the True God."

The Word of the Lord! The moral law abideth for ever. Right is right, and wrong is wrong, by an absolute decree. Though all appearances are against it, "though hand join in hand"—appearances are one thing and reality quite another—right in the long run must prevail, and "wickedness shall not go unpunished." It is ever true that to

put God first ; to refuse to make any object other than Him the object of final worship ; to consecrate to Him the gift of speech ; to consecrate to Him the gift of time ; to reverence authority where He has placed it, especially in fatherhood, which is the shadow of Himself ; to respect the gift of life ; to deal reverently with the tremendous power of the transmission of life ; to respect the property of others ; to respect that most valuable form of property, a neighbour's good name ; to be loyal to truth ; to guard from the touch of wrong desires the sacred sanctuary of motive ;— in other words, the Ten Commandments, the moral law, these abide for ever ; these come from the very heart, come from the very nature of God ; these can be made a part of our very being, and, if so, we may be sure they will not fail us when all things pass and change.

The Word of the Lord ! The Catholic Faith abideth for ever. Call it the Divine revelation, call it the Gospel of Christ, call it the Catholic Faith, call it what you will ; do not quarrel about names, but remember that that body of unchanging truth with regard to God's nature and man's dealing and man's relation to God does not change. It is full of simple truths for the devout and unlearned mind ; it is full of the highest truths for the exercise of the most exalted intellect ; but, above all, it is meant to feed and direct the immortal part of man. It is the knowledge to know which practically is to be learned for eternity, even if we are wanting in much culture, which is useful and interesting, for the present moment ; it is of such importance that not to know it and not to live by it, even if we have all other learning, is to be destitute indeed. Of all duties there is none more paramount than, in heart and life, to "hold the faith."

The Word of the Lord ! The Bible in its sacred and unapproached pre-eminence abideth for ever. Its charm as a varied literature cannot but be widely felt ; its wonderful pathos, its deep reality, its unbending witness to the glory of righteousness, its constant insistence on the reality and greatness of the unseen—these things no one can deny. But we are told in some quarters that “the higher criticism” of this enlightened age has proved a solvent to the old beliefs about the Bible. Certainly reverent criticism has done much to illustrate its history and illuminate its meaning. But there is another kind of criticism which is far enough from reverent. It makes short work of the Holy Scriptures. For Genesis it leaves us a discredited myth ; for the greatest of the prophets it bestows upon us sixteen Isaiahs ; and the Gospels, especially the fourth Gospel, it empties of their value as infallible records. It were an evil day for England, it were an evil day for Christendom, were this sort of thing to prove the final word on the Bible.

But we may take courage. As various unbelieving criticisms arise, they startle or they attract ; “the world goes wondering after the beast,” the fashion passes, the last novelty is dismissed to the limbo of forgotten audacities, and the old book lives on. It lives on because it has in it the life and thought of the unchanging God, felt in serious moments to be of the last importance for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for consolation, to the soul in the journey of life.

The Word of the Lord ! The Church in all her teaching abideth for ever. She has had a strange and chequered history. She has had her human side as well as her Divine. She has had her family quarrels, hindering her Divine mission. She has made great mistakes, she has had sorrow-

ful defeats, but she has had triumphant victories. Like her Lord, she is in her throes of passion, but after her Good Friday there will come her Easter Day. She has used all phases of changing civilization; she has used all varieties of human character and human circumstance; she has been at home with the high-born and she has made friends among the lowly; she has soothed the pain of the sick-bed and brought hope and consolation by the open grave, and she has not neglected to enter into the joys of the marriage morning. But above all, amidst all the vicissitudes of her changeful career, the living voice of the living God has been heard in her, in her creeds, in her handing on of the sacramental mysteries, in her psalms of praise, in her words of prayer, in her voices of teaching.

Other kingdoms may rise and flourish and wane. *She* carries with her the promise of perpetuity; she has in her the presence of Him "Who liveth and was dead, and is alive for evermore."

The Word of the Lord! Turn to humbler themes. Blessed memories, and holy teachings, and holy lives abide for ever. God's Word has sometimes come to us from a loving mother, or a wise father, or a dear friend. We may have neglected it at the time, but it was not lost; it does not return to God void, but accomplishes the work that was given it to do. Late—perhaps too late for our perfect peace of mind—we only "pay to the mouldering dust the tribute that should have been paid to the beating heart." Blessed are we if, though late, the tribute be paid, and into our souls there sinks as an eternal treasure this Word of the Lord.

The Word of the Lord! The most spiritual, the most splendid of all Gospels, the most Divine work ever penned

by mortal man, opens, you will remember, thus : " In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God."

The Word of the Lord ! Jesus Christ abideth for ever. The same in His unimpeachable authority, the same in the exact truth of His moral teaching, the same in the depth of His Divine relations, the same in His perfect example, the same in His tender pity, the same in His width of sympathy, the same in His priestly power of sacrifice, the same in His kingly prerogative of pardon ; the strength of life, the support in death, the joy of His people for eternity. He is as He ever was—blessed be God, as He ever will be—the Way, the Truth, and the Life, to all who come unto God through Him.

V.

The age we live in is marked in many of the departments of its activity by what may be called "sensationalism." We find it in literature, in art, even in religion. We are thankful for great religious revivals, but we cannot conceal a fear that there is a tendency among us to talk of religion, to be interested about religious things, to try experiments in religion rather than to live in the powers of religion. Surely, if ever there was a time that needed it, this time does ; that we should insist on keeping the eye upon realities, lest we should be deluded by appearance ; on firmly choosing the permanent, lest what is only passing should enchain our souls. This wonderful order of things, of which we form part, never had a more absorbing power than it is likely to have upon this generation, from the vast extension of knowledge and discovery, and the tremendous pressure of life.

But when we withdraw within ourselves from out the passing scene, surely we cannot help each of us remembering in serious moments that, in relation to that scene, we are but withering grass or fading flower ; and if so, it is wise, it is practical, nay, it strengthens and brightens life, to keep before ourselves and before others the fact of the great contrast.

I am sure I am right in this, for, taking men all round, taking our own countrymen with their strong practical character and their deep religious instincts, we find that most are neither very good nor very bad, but on the whole balancing between the two. It is for us Christians, in proportion as we are loyal to our Lord and His teaching, to help others, to be careful ourselves, to strike the balance in the right direction. And surely few things, speaking broadly, are more likely to conduce to this than a deepening sense of the real relative value of the things that are passing and those that last.

I am sure I am right in this, because it was the way of Jesus Christ. He took His place in His day and generation with simplicity and naturalness. He never allowed Himself to be what some religious teachers have been—wild or fanatical, or unbalanced or overstrained. He had at times to do with large multitudes, but He appeared to do His work on earth by being painstaking and careful and real with the single souls that came under His more immediate influence. He threw new meanings into old truths, and added fresh vigour to ascertained obligations, by living in that startling and wonderful way, which so attracts us in the Gospels, as a citizen of His own country and His own time, but with a heart and purpose in eternity.

I am sure I am right in this, for there is one great

permanent power which has final force beyond all known forces in this sad world ; whatever else be passing, it has a lasting force. To it we owe whatever is best within us. It can change darkness into brightness, and turn sorrow into joy ; it can illuminate the blackest clouds, so that they are not accepted as a final barrier, but are known to cover something beautiful beyond. It can break the hardest heart and unlock the most close-fastened conscience. It can make the most humble life, the most trying circumstances, fruitful and even happy. It can give life brightness, and even take the darkness from the grave. It is not of time. It is not passing. It is lasting ; it is of eternity—Self-Sacrificing Love—the love of God for His own glorious sake, the love of man for sake of God. “See that ye love one another with pure heart fervently”—“for he that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God ; for God is Love.”

A few more years, a few more breaking dawns and setting suns, a few more stretches of brightest joy, a few more leagues of cloudy sorrow, a few more spring flowers coming with their gay young life, a few more autumn leaves driven distracted and helpless before the pitiless gale, a few more meetings, a few more partings, and for us it will all be over. No, I am wrong. Not all ; for every high purpose faithfully followed, every true act of penitence for wrong that has been committed, every effort to do our duty, every humble act of kindness, considerateness, self-sacrificing devotion, will meet us again, by His merits and His mercy, in that eternity to which *they*, to which *we*, belong, in the “Well done, good and faithful ; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

THE FRIEND IN NEED.

SERMON VIII.

THE FRIEND IN NEED.

“And He said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. . . . And He said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.”—S. LUKE vii. 48, 50.

THE journey of life, then, offering many things that are bright and joyous, and which foretell the real greatness and beauty of the destiny of man, is also beset with difficulties and surrounded by sorrows. It does not need the Christian revelation—as we have before now remembered—to inform us of what is an evident although mysterious fact—our fallen state. Man needs a careful education that he may guide the steps of his life wisely and rightly on the journey, and he is furnished, as we have seen, with all those forces which may be described as the “moral life.”

Christianity, however, although it lays stress upon this, although it interprets and extends it, although it is rich in moral principles and moral examples, and sufficiently emphatic as to the supremacy and seriousness of Conscience, goes a great deal further in the help it offers to us all. If it were not so it could only take its place as one among many of the philosophies of life which various teachers have put forward from time to time as suggestions, more or less tentative, to assist their fellow-men.

Christianity is either more than a philosophy, or it is nothing at all.

Christianity is a *religion*. There is, we know, dear friends, a tendency very prevalent in our own day to try to make Christianity do duty as a forcible, practical philosophy without being a religion at all. The effort is a vain one. You cannot get the full blown rose, or the tender beauty of the rosebud filling the air with sweet scent on a summer morning, if you have deliberately cut the roots away. The historical Founder of the Christian Church must have been, must be, what He professed Himself, what His disciples believed Him when first He came, what His Church believes Him still to be, *or* the mistake or the imposture must be so vast and far-reaching, that the consequences can hardly be dwelt upon as being likely to assist man in his journey of life. Man *needs* a *religion*, and the Christian Church asserts that he has a Friend in his need.

I.

Religion, my brethren, we cannot fail to feel is a deeper thing than morality. Morality suggests to us rules and principles. It is noble, it is true, it is necessary, but it is *hard*. It requires a keen eye to detect its meanings; it requires spiritual vigour to translate them into practice, and our eyes are not keen; they are dimmed with sin or blinded by tears, and our strength is not vigorous; we are often tottering along a difficult path, rather than walking firmly upon an even road.

Morality applies itself first to one point and then to another point of duty; we are apt, even if we are its fairly

good disciples, to be unbalanced, to lay so much stress upon one duty, that we forget another. "Duty" is indeed a noble word, but fallen man is often apt enough to interpret it as applying to what most immediately seems to arrest his attention ; he is not inapt to do his duty by his family, but forget it, perhaps, to his neighbours, or to do it to society, but neglect it at home. Morality is hard and active ; it has got its eye outside, and from the outside carries messages in. It holds up a high ideal indeed, but there is hardness about it, and want of human help. By itself it reminds man of *failure*.

Religion, on the contrary, applies itself not to a point here or a point there, but to the whole life ; it is a harmonizing power, it carries the soul forth into action with forces stronger than its own ; it is morality with life and power thrown into it from a living Presence. It is a felt relation between the creature and his God, and it does not lay down a rule here and there to guide conduct, but it sweeps through the whole being with a breath of life which gives to moral rules the energy and beauty of the thoughts and will of One Who can be known and loved. Looked at from one aspect, it seems to be a great emotion, for it undoubtedly clasps and stirs the emotional nature of man, wakening up the very springs of affection, setting all the chords of being in vibration, and penetrating even to the fountains of tears. Looked at from another point of view, it is a stirring enthusiasm ; the mind is illuminated by it, as well as the affectionate nature warmed. It is "an enthusiasm of humanity," because it is an enthusiasm from and for God. Looked at from another point of view, it is an increasing knowledge, coming from without, and poured into the human soul, with a corresponding trust and sense

of dependence possessing the creature as he looks up towards God.

But more. There are natural and necessary relations between man and the Being to Whom he owes his life—the relation of a living creature to its reason, its object, and to the end of its life; the relation, Christianity teaches us, more tender and perfect, of a child to its father. From these relations there results a *tie* or *bond* between man and God. To know and feel that bond or tie, to strengthen it as it should be strengthened, to maintain it in the energy that is necessary for practical results, to fix it in living activity so that it shall not be broken,—that is to have a religion. To neglect or ignore all this is to be missing the true aim of life. To recognize and act upon this is to be a religious man.

Brethren, we know too well how much that tie has been weakened or broken by the mysterious fact of sin—by the abuse, that is, of the gift of free will and the surrender to unregulated desire. Man yearns, at least in his better moments, to feel the closeness of that tie, and it is the contention of the Christian Church that it has been, that it can be, reformed or strengthened only by One, Whom, therefore, in the journey of life we may call our Friend in need—reformed or strengthened, my brothers and sisters, only by Jesus Christ.

II.

Of His place as a Friend in our journey, one of the most beautiful revelations and illustrations is that contained in the text. The life of Christ in the New Testament is, after all, only a selection from amongst the abundant incidents which were at the disposal of the writers of the Gospels,

such as were seen to be sufficient by the Divine Spirit Who guided them to show to man the course of action, which he needs to know, of the Eternal Word. Few of the incidents recorded are more beautiful than the scene in the house of Simon the Pharisee, or more entirely show us how Jesus Christ, and He alone, is the very embodiment of that religion which we need as friend and guide in the journey of life.

Of our Lord's host on the occasion we know little, except that he seems to have been a wealthy Pharisee. Although for some reason or other—perhaps curiosity, perhaps to be in the fashion at the moment, perhaps by a secret drawing towards the great Teacher that he could not himself explain or understand—Jesus of Nazareth was his invited Guest, yet he seems to have treated Him with scant courtesy. The various omissions which our Lord enumerates were omissions of ordinary duties of hospitality which would have been recognized by any host in the East. There would appear to have been just a touch of high-bred scorn in Simon, as of one who is condescending to a Guest not holding a recognized position, and to Whom he would scarcely take the trouble to be more than rather insufficiently civil. Besides the person of the host and of Jesus Christ Himself, the evangelist calls our attention to the broken-hearted woman who was, from the expression used of her in the narrative, evidently a notorious person for her beauty and her fall. Christian tradition has assured us for many centuries that this was *Mary the Magdalene*.

We need not waste our time by discussing here and now whether or not she was the same person as Mary of Bethany. What we are quite sure of is that she was a sinner. In the journey of life her feet had stumbled, and her fall had been great. To the mass of those around her, and above all to

the highly respectable, scornful, and self-satisfied Pharisee, she was an object of loathing and contempt. But to Mary—whose sin unquestionably deserved the reprobation of good men—a strange thing had happened. She had come face to face with the holiest and noblest, the best Man who ever lived. She had met One to Whom her sin must have been infinitely more repulsive than to any of her fellow-creatures ; but she could not fail to feel that along with that repulsion towards her sin, there was unfathomable love and pity towards herself. In Jesus Christ, amidst all the darkness and ruin of her life, she had seen the real beauty of goodness, the beauty of holiness, the attractiveness of God.

My brethren, she had not shut her eyes to the vision. Her whole being stretched out to clasp that revelation with a living faith ; her heart was moved with the deepest emotion ; she loathed her sin ; she felt too sad at the dreadful downfall to have any anger in her at the scorn of men ; self was lost in devotion to the highest goodness ; there was real repentance, because there was real turning from everything that could separate her from that glorious Life. She could scarcely feel herself fit to approach Him ; she could not find it possible to be absent from Him ; she loved God in Jesus Christ.

How the scene has sunk into the heart of Christendom ! For how much we all of us need what changed the life of the Magdalene—a true sense of the nearness and beauty and goodness of the “ Friend of sinners ” ! Of course Mary had not been called to the Pharisee’s feast ; but, in the free-and-easy Eastern fashion, she was able to enter the open house and watch the banquet. To be near Jesus—near the one living Being Who had wakened up in her a sense of the beauty of goodness, a sense of the horror of

sin—that was all she wanted. Not to be noticed by Him—for she could scarcely raise her mind to so high an ambition, and indeed His unselfishness had passed into her soul, and she was not thinking of herself but of Him—not to be noticed by Him, but to do something *for* Him, however small, seeing that He had done so much for her, this was what she desired. More; something of value she had, perhaps won by, perhaps used for, her miserable life, and so entirely had she turned away from the horror of her sin, that *this* she would sacrifice to her Saviour.

Brethren, we pause to notice that here is an example of *real* repentance. There is downright sorrow; there is no attempt at covering over or brazening out the sin; there is the turning courageously and entirely to an amended life, guaranteed by the surrender of something most valuable which bound the soul to a shameful past. In our journey of life too often all the moral forces which are placed at our disposal become only a witness of our tremendous failure. Well for us if we take pains to realize the meaning of our fall, be it small or be it great! Well for us if we have grace to see and know the depth of our need! But oh, how ill for us if all that even were so, and if we had not near us a Friend of sinners! Thank God we have. Jesus Christ is now just what He was, and once and again makes Himself as near to us, and shows us the real beauty of goodness and the real hatefulness of sin as He did to the Magdalene; and if only we act towards Him as she did, He will be to us just what He was to her.

Some of the greatest painters have vied with one another in making efforts to represent the Magdalene; but no genius expressing itself even in a high work of art can bring that scene more home to us in its essential features

than can our own hearts if once in sin and in repentance we have felt the need of a Saviour. We can well imagine the cool banqueting-chamber in the hot Eastern weather at Magdala. We can well imagine the guests reclining in their Eastern fashion by the table, and we can picture to ourselves the graceful figure of the beautiful woman who flitted in and stood silently behind the guests by the bared feet of the Saviour. We can see her with her pain-stricken but love-illuminated eyes gazing on Him Who had been to her a revelation of a new life. Then come the hot, burning tears falling upon His feet; then the hasty wiping off of them with her long beautiful hair, which hung down unbound and uncovered because of her fall and her sin; then the eager kisses of reverent affection and the anointing of the travel-stained feet with the precious ointment. Still she bends over, still her tears fall, raining silently upon His feet, for her heart is breaking, and still she wipes them away. Wonderful moment! He, the spotless Purity, does not reprove her, does not repulse. As He has awakened her by His goodness to a sense of her sin, so He has drawn her by that perfection of manhood and tenderness, all athrill with sympathy for the fallen and the lost, which seemed to say by every action, every motion, every look, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Then, more astonishing still, with gentleness and courtesy, but perfect frankness and decision, the self-satisfied Pharisee is reproved, and she, the lost, the despised one, is recognized for the gift she has given and the love that has prompted it, and receives His benediction of peace. Is it to be wondered at that she could never lose sight of Him, never forget Him? Is it to be wondered at that she stood in anguish by His cross on the day of His

Passion, that she joined with others in seeing to it that His Sacred Body was laid tenderly in the sepulchre, and that she was the first to see Him in His resurrection-life on Easter Day? No, it is not to be wondered at; for He had wakened her soul from the deathly sleep of sin by the one real force that can ever move a hardened and death-stricken life—by the love of God passing through the heart of man! It is not to be wondered at; for had He not revived in her that one great force which alone can make us happy? In spite of her sin, He had taught her what seemed so impossible for a heart so corrupted and shattered—

“Softer than silent, penitential tears,
Sweeter than nard upon His sacred feet,
Fell His dear pity on her shame and fears,
Calming the heart that once so wildly beat.
Oh, tender Saviour, how *Thy* heart was moved
Because so very, very much she loved!”

Ah! brethren, what is important for us to remember in contemplation of such a scene is that in the course of life's chequered journey the heart is apt to lose some of its tenderness wherever there has been permitted sin—that it is, more than anything else, the wakening up to love and goodness which can soften the heart to a sincere repentance, and that that repentance revives within it the best of all forces which ennoble and strengthens life—the love of God. In a thousand ways may that be brought home to different souls—sometimes by memories of the past; sometimes by the play of natural affections; sometimes by secret whispers of grace in moments of crisis and trial in life. But of this we may be sure, that we fallen creatures are not reawakened to goodness, or stimulated to a loving activity, or roused to sincere and fruitful repentance except by con-

tact with a Higher than ourselves. No mere moral rules will do if they stand alone. They are only powerful if they are embodied and expressed in a noble life, and felt by us through a beating heart. If ever we are lifted up from sloth or selfishness ; if ever our repentance is deepened into an active and fruitful principle ; if ever we are stimulated to higher efforts towards duty, and more generous love for others, it is quite sure to be through contact with some living life better and nobler than our own. The echoes of the words of such ring in our ears long after the lips that uttered them have perhaps been sealed in death. The clasp of the hands of such still seems warm to our touch, though our hands are empty and theirs are cold in the grave. For, indeed, each one who has ever affected another soul so as to deepen repentance, or waken flagging hope, or rekindle half-extinguished faith, or warm again that love, human and divine, which is the life-blood of the soul—every one who has ever done these things has only done them by being to us the channel and expression of Him Who is the Friend of sinners. Blessed are we if so or otherwise He has approached us, and we have not closed our hearts against Him, but allowed the tears of penitence to fall, and heard His accents speaking peace ! And blessed, more blessed, if, when that has been so by a life in which His love has been kept alive even in such sinful hearts as ours, *we* have brought home to others who have been in need, amidst the difficulties of life's journey, the large love and tender pity of Jesus Christ !

III.

The Church reminds us of that which Scripture constantly witnesses to, the many ways in which our blessed Master meets the special needs of the soul.

(1) Religion is the passion of humanity, for man cannot but feel that he is a dependent creature, and that he desires to know Him from Whom he comes. The tie between man and God is only felt effectively when man is able to approach his Creator, not merely with a sense of awe and reverence and fear and wonder, but with a certainty that he is approaching a loving Heart. Can we know what God's nature is? Will God be patient with us? Does He care for us? Will He support us in our weakness? Can we hope for guidance from Him in perplexity? Is He very near to us, or very far away, as He sometimes seems? In the last and darkest disaster of all—in death—will He stand by us? In the life beyond the grave is there a hope for us as for those who are going home? These questions, and such as these, will insist on rising in our minds. There is plenty to scare us if without faith and without hope we survey the many difficulties in the path of our pilgrimage. There are plenty of serious and severe sayings in the Gospel as to the consequences of unrepented sin. The life that we are living is constantly put before us there as a life of probation, a life given to us for the purpose of learning to be obedient, and do our duty and prepare ourselves for another life closely connected with this. There are solemn sayings as to the judgment which succeeds our journey. There are serious reminders of a great division between those who are finally fixed in sin and those who have conquered it through the grace of Christ. There are mysterious things

hinted at which set us thinking and asking questions, which do not leave us although they cannot be fully answered. There are regions of mystery and difficulty in the history of man and of God's dealings with His creatures. But anyhow this is plain to those who hold the Christian faith, that God is love—love the most engaging and tender and helpful, because He, our Father, is revealed to us by Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, so to speak, went out of His way to accumulate the most tender and persuasive images. He calls Himself the Good Shepherd, illustrating by that the perfection of His sympathy, the minuteness of His care, and the completeness of His devotion to His people. He calls Himself the Door of the sheep, to indicate to us the safety and peace and security of our place as members of His Church. Only to live the life of the Church, only to use her means of grace, only to exercise her practices of devotion—that simple, straightforward, if I may say so, common-sense view of the teaching and practice of religion which we call the Catholic faith—only this, and not some great thing, is required of us in order to grow in grace, to remain in union with Christ, and so to be saved. He calls Himself the True Vine, to indicate to us our union in Him with others who are living and with others who are gone, and the astonishing power of fruitfulness which comes from that union. We often feel that life is dark, and that we are surrounded with perplexities; He calls Himself the Light of the world, so that if we walk in Him we shall not “walk in darkness.” But besides these descriptions of Himself and His office, we have the narratives of the actions of His life, showing His unflagging goodness and His unwearying care. And then, *then* we reach *the* point for which the Catholic Church has contended with such earnestness. In all these things

He reveals to us the Father; He is the Eternal Son; He and His Father are one. Whosoever "hath seen Him hath seen the Father;" the longing need of the soul is satisfied. We know our God for what He is when we study the life and character of Jesus Christ.

(2) And again, in the journey of life we need—need I repeat it?—an example, an ideal. It is impossible to read the New Testament without being struck by the fact that there is before us a Character the great lines of Whose life are meant for imitation, although the details are wholly unlike the lives of modern times. In our sincerest moments we really want to know what is the standard of life by which we are to try and shape our own. We want to see our way amidst the many difficulties of choice, which are not diminished for us, but in some respects even increased, by civilization, notwithstanding the real blessings it has brought. We want to know what is true prudence; we do not want to deceive ourselves, and make false compromises, nor, on the other hand, to evaporate our religion away in unmeasured enthusiasms or unbalanced fanaticism; we want to be robust and real religious people, placed by Divine Providence under the special circumstances of the age to which we belong. And we have before us one Figure, and only one, in the whole reach of history Who impresses us with the beauty and necessity of effort towards sincere and deep and harmonious *reality*. Things may be very different between our age and the age in which Christ came, but one thing is not different, we feel, under the sanction of a Divine example, viz. the beauty of a life of sincerity and truth. We are carried up in our better moments to high thoughts of another world. Our spasmodic enthusiasms at another time may carry us away into the seeking for large

schemes and noisy undertakings, so congenial to the spirit of the present age. We look to Christ, and in Him, and alone in Him perfectly, we have the example of One Who was ready for great things or small things, just as they came ; Who seemed most to do His work by His careful efforts for men or women, *soul by soul*, but Who, whether He acted on human beings individually or in large multitudes, always did the work of Time earnestly, diligently, carefully, with a temper of mind saturated, so to speak, with Eternity. We are perplexed sometimes as to how to act towards others ; as to how, as a final principle, to guide our lives. We turn to Christ ; He reads a lesson in our journey ; we see infinite purity and deep humility and active self-denial, but we see also our *all* really summed up in His own new commandment, "That ye love one another, as I have loved you." The circumstances of our lives, indeed, as I have often said to you, are very different from what were the circumstances of His. "But," to quote another's words, "for the soul wherever it is, Christ our Lord has one unchanging call, 'Be perfect ;' and He has one unchanging rule for its fulfilment, 'Be what I am, feel what I felt, do as I should do.' How shall we ? How but by looking steadfastly at Him, and trying to see and know Him ?" This we can do by the study of the Gospels. This we can do in quiet thought. This we can do, with whatever failures, in our efforts to fulfil what we believe He would approve, above all and certainly by keeping bright in the soul the sense of the beauty and value of a loving and unselfish life.

(3) But amidst the needs of the soul on the path of its pilgrimage there is no need so deep as that of how to deal with its sin. Brethren, in spite of our vast powers of self-deceit, in spite of the fact that the commission of sin, and

especially the habitual commission of sin, blinds us, or tends to blind us, to its seriousness, there are moments, there must be moments, when there comes vividly before us the grave nature of anything we have done which is wrong. It is then, unless we are to harden ourselves against the higher voices which speak to us, or fall into a paralyzing despondency—it is then that we need Jesus Christ. We know that He spoke severe words, very severe words, against high-handed and determined and wilful and unrepentant sin, but we also know the graciousness and tenderness beyond all that we could hope for towards those who really turn to Him—of this Friend of sinners. I suppose, in the ups and downs of life, when souls have wakened up to the dreadful ness of wrong-doing, and to the impossibility of unmaking the Past, that few things have so revived hope, and roused to repentance, and stimulated to fresh effort, as the tender story of the prodigal son and the father's eagerness to run to meet him, left to us from our Saviour's lips, or the pathetic account of the action of the Magdalene and the loving generosity of Jesus recorded in the narrative of the feast at the house of Simon the Pharisee.

(4) Need I add that He Who reveals the Father, Who supplies a true ideal for the human life, Who is at once the Redeemer and Absolver for human sin, has not left us without strength to carry out the lessons that He Himself has taught? Jesus Christ is the Giver of grace. He makes Himself an inward gift to the soul that seeks Him. Utterly, unutterably weak as we are in ourselves, we “can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth us.” “As thy day, so shall thy strength be,” is His unfailing promise to His children who seek Him.

Ah! there is no doubt that life is full of difficulties; no

doubt that clouds gather round us, and it is not always easy to see; no doubt that our wills are weak, that our hearts often sink within us, that our faith and our hope often flag when we need them to stand. But religion remains a real thing. There is still a real tie between man and his Maker. Life is most nobly lived, and most fruitfully, if we strive never to forget that tie, but to act in consciousness of its power. Our needs are great, our sins are many. God seems far from us at times, and our strength is often failing, but there remains One by us Who meets all these difficulties, on Whose strength and tenderness we still can lean, from Whose goodness we still may learn, towards Whom we may stretch out a love that will never be slighted or despised. Just as it was with Mary in her penitential sorrow, there remains, ready to speak peace to those who sincerely seek Him, the Friend of sinners—Jesus Christ.

THE LIFE OF PEACE.

SERMON IX.

THE LIFE OF PEACE.

“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee : because he trusteth in Thee.”—ISA. xxvi. 3.

THIS part of the prophecy of Isaiah is the very romance of religion. It has all that mysterious glory which a young heart—whether in the old or young—so often makes for itself, out of a world which to other eyes seems so commonplace and even jaded, and what the French would call *fade*. We do not need the learned disquisitions of the critics to teach us that this part of the great prophet's writings is a magnificent poem. I do not mean by that that it is not direct, Divine revelation, but that it is revelation clothed in that splendid robe of thought and speech which comes from the inner springs of things. Other parts of Isaiah are history ; other parts are prose of varying character—so much so, that the intelligent critics, who seem to imagine that a thoughtful, or gifted, or inspired man can never be in any but *one* mood of mind, have decided to divide Isaiah up into a number of Isaiahs, and to close their eyes to that underlying unity which one would have supposed plain enough to even less gifted minds. This part of Isaiah, however, none will deny is a splendid poem.

In the earlier chapters there are records of judgment after judgment of God. Then there comes the fierce prophecy of some tremendous and world-embracing judgment. In the earlier chapters, also, there are hints of coming help and statements as to a future salvation, and these are gathered up into one splendid and poetical statement of the triumph of goodness and the blessedness of the righteous. Sometimes we are tempted to think that the prophet has his eye only upon the future splendours of a heavenly commonwealth; then, again, we seem to see some hints that he is thinking also of an earthly Zion; but, in fact, we cannot fail to feel that earthly and heavenly melt the one into the other, that the kingdom of God that is within us—according to the teaching of Christ—is the same kingdom, although here and now clouded with streaks of darkness, as that which without one passing shadow shall hold supremacy in the future life. Lest, indeed, we should be tempted to imagine either that the prophet is dwelling on something earthly or even national, or that he is purely transcendental, and gazing beyond the stars, we are taken by the hand and led by him into the inner sanctuary of the human soul. God is too great to deal only in vast sensations, or thrilling facts, or telling spectacles, or overwhelming demonstrations, like men who look upon religion as they look upon any great thing that moves humanity, as chiefly useful for producing an effect. God values each soul, and with soul after soul, each as a living stone, is built up His temple in Zion. Few things in Holy Scripture are more consoling and more full of teaching than this statement of the text. In the midst of the thrilling description of a tremendous triumph, in the midst of the startling statements of the final establishment

of the city of God, we are suddenly reminded, lest we should think that high things and simple things do not go together in the Divine mind, that the life of peace in our pilgrim-journey may be a very real thing—as real as it is in the Mount Zion of the future, though not, of course, because of our frailty, so complete; that it springs from precisely the same source as that from which it will take its life in eternity; that it springs from its trust in God. “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee.”

I.

It is worth while to pause for a moment, brethren, to remind ourselves what stress is laid in Scripture upon the habit of *trust*. Naturally, we find this brought out most distinctly in those writings which deal more than others with the interior and spiritual life—in the Prophets and the Psalms. “Some put their *trust* in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the Name of the Lord our God.” Or again, “My God, I have put my *trust* in Thee; oh, let me not be confounded!” “Oh, how plentiful is Thy goodness . . . that Thou hast prepared for them that put their *trust* in Thee!” “The Lord delivereth the souls of His servants; and all they that put their *trust* in Him shall not be destitute;” “Put thou thy *trust* in the Lord, and be doing good;” “The Lord shall stand by them and save them . . . because they have put their *trust* in Him;” “I will not trust in my bow . . . but it is Thou that savest us.” And then there is the statement of the miserable fall of the wicked accounted for in this way: “Lo! this is the man that took not God for his strength

but trusted unto the multitude of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness." Here again is the cry of a religious mind: "I will dwell in Thy tabernacle for ever; and my *trust* shall be under the covering of Thy wings;" or, "The righteous shall rejoice in the Lord, and put his *trust* in Him, and all they that are true of heart shall be glad." And again in a beautiful image, in which God is represented as the mother-bird sheltering her young, "He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shalt thou *trust*." Or again, in another period of psalmody, the sweet singer of Israel teaches, "It is better to *trust* in the Lord than to put any confidence in man;" or again, he feels that he can fearlessly meet those who jibe at higher things: "So shall I make answer unto my blasphemers, for my *trust* is in Thy Word." And not to multiply quotations from the Psalmist—for they flash across the memory from almost every Psalm—who can forget the triumphant description of those who are "good and true of heart"? "They that put their *trust* in the Lord shall be even as the Mount Zion, which may not be removed, but standeth fast for ever."

It is perhaps worth while to remember that the same is the case with the prophets. "I will *trust*, and not be afraid," is the cry of Isaiah. "Who is among you," again he crieth to those who in a dark time have not forsaken religion—"who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him *trust* in the Name of the Lord, and stay upon his God."

The same truth comes out in Jeremiah, amidst all his sadness, and in the lesser prophets; and one of the most beautiful prophecies of Malachi dwells upon the fact that

in the Name of the Messiah the time shall come that not only the Jews, but the Gentiles—the nations—shall *trust*. And can we forget how the great Apostle, in writing to his disciple Timothy, assigns this attitude of soul as the true account of the endurance of Apostolic trial? “For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we *trust* in the living God, Who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.” Do we sufficiently take into our minds the importance attached in Holy Scripture to the spiritual attitude of *trust* in God?

It does not seem unreasonable, surely, that this should be so if we question the fundamental facts of our own nature. There is something in us which demands the exercise of trust if things are to go on rightly at all. Society cannot long be held together unless there is some exercise of trust between man and man. The miserable suspiciousness which forms so marked a characteristic in human nature, and especially in English human nature, although it finds grounds enough for justification in much of human action, is still a sad mark of the Fall. An over-trusting nature is likely enough to be the victim of saddening surprises, likely enough to suffer from the liar and the cheat, likely enough to receive at times severe shocks and to undergo bitter disappointments; but at least it will have about it characteristics of generosity and springs of nobleness which are scarcely to be hoped for in the habitually suspicious.

II.

It is equally striking, and naturally so, that Holy Scripture should lay stress upon faithfulness. For faithfulness is the co-relative of trust. If, indeed, in any nature trust is to be

a prevailing power, it is because that in *that* nature there is some deep conviction that somewhere or other faithfulness does exist. "I have declared Thy faithfulness ;" "I will make known Thy faithfulness;" "Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the heavens;" "In faithfulness Thou hast afflicted me;"—such are statements of various psalmists in speaking of God. "Righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins;" such is Isaiah's description of the Saviour. "I will even betroth thee unto Me in faithfulness;" such is the promise of God by Hosea to His repentant Church. And when the Divine Christ, speaking out of eternity by S. John, would exhort His Church and His people to rise to the height of their calling, "Be thou faithful unto death," He says, "and I will give thee a crown of life." And among the revelations which are made to us in Holy Scripture of the character of God, S. Paul asserts categorically that "God is faithful."

Faithfulness, indeed, may be said to be the most beautiful and the most necessary characteristic in a true soul. There are many beautiful things in the moral world; there are all sorts of gradations of light, and all sorts of combinations of colour; just as in the natural world the eye may delight itself in the variegated spectacle of changing flowers and colouring leaves, or in the constant and ever-varying pageantry of the splendid heavens. So in human character. Even with all our sins and all our frailties, there is an unfathomable fund of interest, and there are inexhaustible resources of beauty. There are few studies so deeply interesting as the study of human nature. We know well enough that there is plenty to sadden us in such a study; and yet no man, unless he be a cynic or a fool, can abate

his interest in a nature so interesting that the Son of God took it upon Himself, and that for it He died.

But besides this high Christian motive for an interest in human nature, to the spiritual artist it is interesting in itself. It is wonderful to see the play of light and shadow, and it is delightful to discover brightness, and even beauty, where perhaps all at first seemed dark. Its attractiveness is in its variety. There are, of course, more or less broad characteristics which are the peculiar property of different peoples, or varying ages. There are certain lights and shadows which belong with more or less similarity of depth and extent to childhood, to youth, to middle age; there are lines of virtues or strands of sin which we seem able to track, in the main, through different nationalities—through Teutons or Latins, through people of the South or people of the North. Nay, amongst our own acquaintances, or those most nearly bound to us by blood, we may notice broad likenesses in virtue, and yet almost infinite variety in individuality of character. But however much we admire gifts and graces and beautiful characteristics, or incipient, or possible, or developed excellences in human character, there is *one* thing about which we are quite certain, and that is, that the real ground and bond of all that is truly lovely—if that loveliness is to command our permanent admiration and our complete confidence—is *that* characteristic of unshaken truth and firm reality which can be relied upon, which assures us that what we admire has strength in it, and will last—which we call faithfulness. It is the bond of friendship; it is the heart's core of real love; it is the power which demands and draws out, and has a right to draw out and demand, the heart's best gift, which is perfect trust. It is that which to exist at all must exist

without a flaw. It lies behind the nature of moral things, as interminable, unchanging space lies behind our atmosphere and our stars. It has to be taken for granted ; it is so real, it has to be practically forgotten in the moral union between hearts and hearts. It is like the air we breathe, or the earth we tread upon, or the light by which we see the material universe. We hardly reason about it, or think of it, or discuss it. In the real union of moral nature with moral nature, and soul with soul, there it is, there it must be, or all is lost. As nothing in the moral world is so odious, or destructive of human happiness and human goodness, as lightness and inconstancy, so nothing is so necessary, nothing so beautiful, as faithfulness.

.III.

Now, one chief point in religion undoubtedly is a *sense of dependence* ; so important is this, so much does the truth of it press upon many minds, that some good men have gone so far as to believe that in this religion consists. Without entering upon a discussion of such a point as this, it is quite true that a sense of dependence upon some one greater than ourselves is a real need for the development of our higher nature. Man cannot stand alone ; to be self-dependent, for him, is out of the question ; he is born into a society ; it is a mere trick of imagination which has led men to picture the individual man as the unit of the race. His upward aspirations, his longings for a higher life, his yearnings for better things, all point to the fact that there is One above him to Whom he must cling ; and if (by impossibility) there were no God, man, by the inherent necessity of his nature to cling in some sort

to some one greater and stronger than himself, would be evidently the most unfortunate of animals. But for the development of man's higher self there is more than mere clinging needed ; there is something which has in it a moral element, something that implies an effort of the will, something that necessitates a surrender of the affections,—there is *trust*.

Perhaps it is worth while to remember some of the reasons why there is this need of trust. Among the most certain of all phenomena are "change and chance." Mankind in all ages, in their poetry, in their philosophy, have exerted the powers of thought and speech to the utmost to hide this severe fact from their eyes in the public theatres of life, and to bring home in the saddest songs of sweet singers, and the most pointed phrases of deep thinkers, how much it presses upon each individual life. It is so subtle, it is so quiet, it is so steady, it is so persistent, that sometimes we scarcely perceive it, and now and again we are arrested by its consequences, and waken up to find how much it has done with us, and are filled with despair or dismay. Change is evident in the natural world, brought into distincter evidence from time to time by some great catastrophe which is really only the consequence of unflagging change. Change is evident in modes of thought, in ideas, in opinions, in tastes, in ideals—in all, in fact, that influences or guides the intellectual atmosphere of life. Change is evident—need we say it?—in our own individual lives, in the character of the judgments we form, in the way we look at things, in the ambitions we cherish, in the hopes we foster. There is one side of this, of course, which is filled with sadness. There is such a thing, there cannot fail to be, even among the best men, if they have hearts

and affections, at some times a rising of regret. We cannot miss but have, at some moments, a memory, with more or less of sadness, of

“The days that are no more.”

Indulged in to excess, allowed to paralyze the activities of life and the claims of the moment, this, of course, becomes morbid and wrong; but to be without it altogether—though, like other things, it needs to be kept in restraint—is to exhibit a shallow nature, and a cold and callous heart.

There is a good side to this. Scripture speaks of the character advancing “more and more unto the perfect day.” The strong voice of a healthy teacher advises us—

“Grow old along with me,
The best is yet to be;
The last of life, for which the first was planned.”

But if the good side is really to prevail, if the sad view is really only to do its better work, it must be because, amidst the “changes and chances of this mortal life,” man has found an unchanging heart on which he can securely lean—man has discovered *trust in God*. “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee.”

And then another reason for this need of trust is to be found in the terrible pressure with which the world around us at times bears down upon us. We did not choose the circumstances of life; they came to us, as we Christians believe they were appointed for us; but things seem too heavy for us at times. Either duties accumulate, coming hurrying up like flying messengers from distant quarters in a battle-field, telling of disasters and asking for orders; or opportunity slips from

us before we have used it to the full, leaving us with the sense, an uneasy sense, of duties unfulfilled ; or men disappoint us, and a whole system of things on which we placed some reliance changes its face ; or we are startled to find that, without quite realizing it, we have passed from a world of exuberant life and enthusiasm and hope, into a world which seems to have more of the grey clouds of a winter evening than the brilliant colouring of the summer dawn ; or the harder cares of life, with their trivial incidents or their necessary anxieties regarding others, have taken the place of stimulating hopes and emboldening dreams. It is then that we know how entirely necessary it is, in order to keep a young and vigorous spirit—a spirit capable of using the results of past experience ; a spirit capable of guiding others and enlightening our own path ; a spirit dauntless and defiant in the face of difficulties, untiring and energetic in the presence of fatigue ; a spirit humble, and unselfish, and tender, and gentle, yet practical and strong ;—it is then, I say, that we learn how, in order to have this, there must be a faithful God not far from us, and we must trust in Him.

Or, again, think of the constant changes of which every life must be conscious, in the varying play of thought and feeling which surrounds its own inner and central self. At one time, for instance—who has not known it?—the mind is all on the alert. It is capable of creating ; the thoughts which commend themselves to it as exact and appropriate, come almost unbidden. It has flashes of light—or, indeed, it may be truly said they are more than flashes ; it has a heaven, illuminated from horizon line to zenith, and from pole to pole. Time passes, perhaps but a short time, and all is changed ; at best there are murky

clouds, at worst there is darkness. The human mind is sensible at such moments how little it possesses of its own, how much it receives from another ; and if we listen to the lessons it has to teach, we learn to *trust in God*. Need I say that this is also true of the human spirit ? Is it not true of all the saints, a record of whose lives has been left to us ; is it not the experience of every seriously religious person, that there are times when the “heavens are as brass,” and when God seems far away ? It is then that we draw upon the experiences of the past ; it is then that we are assisted by habits formed, if we have been wise, when the days were sunny and the breezes fresh ; it is then that holy words of Scripture, the statements of the Church, and the whispers of our own past experience, come to our aid ; it is then, in fact, that the Holy Spirit of God assists us to put forth the moral forces of faith and hope ; it is then that we act towards our heavenly Father as we would act in perplexing circumstances towards a well-tried friend ; it is then that we trust God.

IV.

To trust God, dear friends, is a duty as well as a grace. It requires, as I have implied, a moral exertion, and, like all moral exertions, it is rendered possible by a disciplined life. If we believe in God, we must be learning steadily to overcome habits of fretfulness, fault-finding, and despondency. We have to face difficulties as things meant for our trial and education—meant to be overcome. We have to be ready to acknowledge our faults, and to learn any salutary lessons that may be taught us by the discovery of them through others, or by the teachings of God in our

own hearts. We have to endeavour to keep before us, with such constancy as we can, the greatness of our end, and to maintain in our will and mind a purpose of dignity proportionate to that end. We have to take God at His word, and take Him into our counsels by prayer on all the details—sorrows, joys, hopes, fears, beliefs, and disbelievings—which crowd around our life. And deep within our hearts, by the grace that He gives us, we may be quite sure that there will be fixed, with increasing strength and helpfulness, the strong and beautiful spirit of trust.

Well may we have it, for it is *the* Faithful One with Whom we have to do. We find Him faithful in the unchanging precision of the laws by which He governs the natural world; we find Him faithful in the unerring uprightness with which He witnesses to the majesty and necessity of moral law; we find Him faithful in the way He fascinates and awakens our souls by the reflections of His goodness which He permits us to see in the lives and characters of His creatures whom He gives to us to love and admire; we find Him faithful in tender responses to the longings of our uplifted hearts, once and again when we need Him. And if, therefore, sometimes His “way is in the sea, and His path in the great waters, and His footsteps are not known;” and if there are streaks of darkness here and there in the natural world, or in His moral government, or in the trials more immediately appointed for ourselves, can we not act—I will not say merely the dutiful, but the sensible part which we should act towards long-tried friends? Can we not see that, if everything at first sight were plain, there would be no room for generosity, no room for the moral recognition of faithfulness at all? Can we not learn

that it is then, just then, that He may rightly demand from us, and that it should be our highest joy and blessing to give, the spirit of an ungrudging trust?

V.

As the prophet's eye is fixed upon Mount Zion, as he sees the beauty of the heavenly city and remembers that right has triumphed and wrong has been finally judged, he is struck by the thought that the real glory of the Divine kingdom before him arises from soul by soul, who form the units of which it is composed, being trained in righteousness and kept in peace. But his thoughts and his teachings go deeper than that. He is not looking merely to the future. The kingdom of God, accomplished in heaven, is begun on earth, and one result of that kingdom in souls that are really under its sway is—peace. It is not meant by this that any sincere Christian this side the grave can escape entirely from struggle. But although the upper waters of the ocean may be brushed by the breeze, or even violently disturbed by the tempest, where the ocean is deep the depths are unmoved. Trust in God deepens the spiritual life; it carries it down into the heart of things. It is by it that duty loses a certain hardness which sometimes repels us in it, however much we acknowledge its dignity and its claim; it is by it that the varying experiences of life come to us with the real force of teaching. The past is no empty story for us, viewed only with regret; the present is no chance condition of things, to which we give no patient thought. We are sure that there is a Providence which has been ordering all things well, even though its purposes of love have sometimes been thwarted

by our sins. And thus our trust deepens our repentances, makes our confessions more searching and sincere; or even when we are dissatisfied with our confessions and repentances, enables us with loving confidence to feel sure that, as we know our intentions are right, all that is wanting will be supplied from the merits of our Master's Passion and from the treasures of His grace.

And what a difference does this trust in God make to us in the region of our affections and in the untravelled districts of the future! All pure and noble earthly loves, of whatever kind and wherever brought to us, by ties of blood, by ties of affection, by ties of friendship, by ties of dependence; every object given to us, in the course of the journey of life, to fill its own niche in the temple, in the sanctuary of our hearts, has a special sacredness all its own, bringing special joys, and laying upon us individual responsibilities, when we are living in that habit of constant trust in a heavenly Father. Why? Because He loves us so dearly and watches over us so carefully, that every power and person who rightly and nobly calls forth our affections can be looked upon as a messenger from Himself.

We have each of us to face a future, a future which is dim with grave responsibilities, a future the details of which are certainly shrouded from our eyes. It is a future which means something of time that is still left to us with all its labour and sorrow, with all its uncertainties and danger, with all the power of stirring an imagination which is sure to be a sheltering home of fears. It is a future which stretches beyond the grave, which introduces us to the unimagined wonders of another world, which makes us tremble at times to think that we, who are dependent so much upon one another, must be torn away from those

on whom we depend; that we, who are creatures of sense and time, must learn to live where time and sense have no meanings at all; that we, who at the very best know ourselves to be deeply soiled with sin, and do not know how deep the canker goes, must be prepared to face spotless holiness and the utter truth of the eternal God. How shall we face such a future? how here keep a quiet mind in view of the eventualities of our remaining years? how be peaceful in the thought of parting with those we love? how face the uncertainties of eternity and the unerring judgment of God? Ah! brethren, bending from the throne of His glory, sent by His Father to manifest His Father's tenderness, to enter into the sorrows of mankind, to take away the sins of the world, there came One Who has *trusted* Himself to His creatures, Who delights to call Himself the Friend of sinners, Who has broken down "the wall of partition" that separated us from our Father, Who has made both one, and has taken away the writing that was against us, nailing it to His Cross. Ah! through Jesus Christ we can learn how entirely we can trust our Father, and learning that, in a world of change and uncertainty, face to face with the dim and mysterious future, we can find what more and more we want as life's journey is being travelled onward, —we can find the blessing of peace.

THE SACRAMENTAL LIFE.

SERMON X.

THE SACRAMENTAL LIFE.

“As many as touched were made perfectly whole.”—S. MATT. xiv. 36.

WHEN the Christian Church undertakes to guide a soul in the journey of life, it presents to its children the Lord Jesus Christ not only as a Friend in moments of danger, but as the constant Source and Spring of strength for our human nature. It is possible to think of our Saviour in an Arian or semi-Arian fashion, so that He presents Himself to our minds as an enlightened Teacher or beneficent Friend. But the real gulf that yawns between all forms of Unitarian mistake and the full truth of the Catholic Faith is never so opened up before our eyes as when we remember that the latter teaches, above all things, that *union* with God, through being united with the Incarnate Word—with Jesus Christ, God and Man—is the deepest need of humanity and the crowning gift of God. When we consider this, it brings us face to face with the fact that the Church teaches that if our journey in life is to be made with the assistance of the forces really needed to guide God’s children through this world to a better country, ours ought to be a life of sacramental union.

I.

We know from revelation that there are close relations between the Word of God and the material and created world. The Eternal Word, as we are told, is the "Brightness of His Father's glory, and the express Image of His Person," and that He hath "appointed Him Heir of all things," and that "by Him also He made the worlds." Again, we are taught that He "is the Image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of every creature: for by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible: . . . all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." The Eternal Word, then, the Reason of God, is the real Type of everything that is beautiful and all that is perfect in the world. In the depths of eternity, infinite was the glory enjoyed and incommunicable in the life of the three adorable Subsistences in the Holy Trinity; but the time came when the Almighty permitted to pass beyond the limits of that substantial life some imperfect image of that glory, and to manifest Himself by His Eternal Word. God by His Word has created and preserved, has manifested Himself in His works, and has shown His goodness and His glory to His intelligent creatures. It is by the Word that the Father has created; it is by Him that He preserves the majestic harmony of the worlds. Pantheism is, indeed, in some measure a perversion of this real truth; but it *is* an entire perversion, for in the Catholic doctrine the teaching is a teaching "of a communication of Divine attributes made to created nature," whereas Pantheism deals with ideas of "substantial emanations," whereby "God is everything and

everything is God." Perhaps Pantheism itself, and such-like grave mistakes, may have arisen from a dim and distorted sense in the minds of men that God would bring Himself into effective communication with the whole of creation. It is in the incarnation of the Eternal Word, it is in the person of the Incarnate, our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, that the union was established, through the humanity of our Master, between the Immaterial and Eternal God and His whole material and spiritual creation. God was "pleased to bring the world through its highest Type into union with Himself," and the possibility of that union being extended to each individual of the race of man through the whole range of his nature is asserted by the sacramental principle ; and, indeed, makes it probable to us, at first sight, that such a principle must be admitted in true religion. We are led, in fact, to expect all that the Church teaches as to Sacraments being "the extension of the Incarnation," when we think of what has been revealed as to the relation of the Eternal Word to created worlds.

II.

But it would be strange indeed, when we think seriously of what our human nature is, if Sacraments were not a part of the revealed faith. Man is a complex being. Of all the subjects that he has been able to study, there are few so interesting as himself. But amidst the vast complexity that he meets with in this study, his nature falls into two great divisions to which he can never close his eyes. He is a material and a spiritual being ; he consists of body and soul.

There have been two opposite errors which have

possessed the minds of men as they studied human nature. First, there is the error of the *materialists*. They practically make matter everything; with them it is the "primary cause of all existence, all life and all forms are but modifications of matter." With those who think in this way all spiritual phenomena resolve themselves into movements of matter; thought is only phosphorus; affections arise from displacements and combinations of molecules. But there are difficulties, insuperable difficulties, in the way of such misbeliefs. Man is too great to be entirely happy in looking downwards. A religion for a consistent materialist would be nonsense; but positivists—who are practically nothing else—have been forced to construct a religion of humanity. However, materialism may be said to have this good side to it—it is a kind of protest against an undue depreciation of the material part of man.

Then, again, there have been those who have gone in the opposite direction, and who have thrown themselves into *spiritualism* of one sort or another. There have been philosophical speculators who have denied altogether the truth of the record of our senses and the objective reality of external material things. To follow them was to be guilty of treason to our first and most effective means of knowledge. But there have been religious spiritualists, basing their convictions upon no such philosophical theories, who practically treat the material part of man as if it had no concern with salvation. They will have everything so "spiritual" in religion that they depreciate all material things—forms of worship, external and visible signs in Sacraments—and so by a one-sided forgetfulness of the one part of our nature, by way of lifting us up to everything that is "spiritual," lead to a maimed and sometimes an

irreverent religion. The right balance is held in these things by the Catholic Faith. Christianity, as it is put forth by the Church and the Bible, teaches that the individual life is soul *and* body, and that we can only neglect either at our peril. Close and wonderful is the union between the two; terrible is the divorce at death; certain is the meeting again in eternity; and our Lord is emphatically called in Scripture the "Saviour of the body." Entirely consistent with the facts of the universe, with the facts of our own individual life, is the sacramental system of the Christian Church. Just as man is body and soul, as we have said, just as the *whole* man is destined to live for ever, just as body and soul are meant to help one another in the worship of God, so does God, in giving gifts to His creatures, give them in a manner consistent with this two-fold nature united in an individual life.

III.

It has ever been observed by the devout teachers of the Church that our Blessed Lord, in His own earthly life, seemed to show us, by His actions towards those who were around Him, and who sought His help, the truth of the sacramental principle. His Divine Person is the meeting-point of God and man, and the actions which are recorded of Him in His sacred Humanity were doubtless meant to teach us how God, through that Humanity, willed to approach, and affect, and enter into union with us, His creatures, in the *whole* range of our nature. Among the vast number of works of mercy which our Lord accomplished when on earth, only a comparatively small number, of course, has been left on record. But this small number is sufficient

to indicate the law of His sacramental activity. He heals the sick, He reinvigorates the paralytic, He raises the dead, He absolves the penitent, He gives sight to the blind, He restores hearing to the deaf; and in all these actions the simple effort of His will would have been all that was necessary. But it was not all that He employed. In some way or other He applies the powers of His sacred Body for dealing with the varying needs of His creatures. He touches with His hand, or He allows Himself to be touched on the hem of His garment, or He speaks solemn words, or He uses a glance with His eye, and so on. He is ever employing the force of His whole Self—Body, Soul, Divinity, in working out the restoration of man.

Again, the mysterious power of that sacred Body—instinct with Divinity—is constantly kept before us. In the moment of transfiguration, its mysterious splendour is revealed to the astonished Apostles; in the moment of penitential agony, it fully expresses the suffering of the soul by the terrible spectacle of the sweat of blood; and when upon the cross He made of Himself, once offered for the sins of the whole world, a sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, His arms were outstretched for a world-wide embrace, His wounded Body and the shedding of His precious Blood were the chosen expressions of the tremendous sacrifice. And again, to assist the faith of His followers—lest that faith should be crippled by materialistic notions and “shortened thoughts,”—after His Resurrection He permitted His disciples to learn at once the *reality* of His sacred Body and its extraordinary and supernatural powers, by the manner of His various appearances and disappearances before them, when that Body was shown to be entirely free from the ordinary limitations of material

substances. When we consider these things in the life and action of our Master, we must surely be thoughtless Christians indeed if we do not expect some sacramental mystery.

IV.

And surely all this comes to us with redoubled force when we consider His manner of dealing with the two great Sacraments. As for the lesser sacraments, doubtless their institution is according to His mind. He promised to guide His Church into all truth; He remained on earth for forty days to teach His Apostles "the things concerning the kingdom of God," concerning, *i.e.*, the Catholic Church; and so we are sure that their manner of action, that the manner of action which the Church has sanctioned, as to the confirming of baptized Christians, as to the ordination to the ranks of the ministry, as to the marriage of the faithful, as to the absolving of souls in penitence, as to the dealing with the sick, is according to the mind of Christ. But with regard to the two *great* Sacraments—the Sacrament of life, that is Baptism, and the Sacrament of nourishment, that is Holy Communion, this also the means of representing before God the one Sacrifice once offered—with regard to these, our Lord's action was peculiarly emphatic. Indeed, we might go further back, and say with truth that He—the Light of the world—enlightened minds in the older dispensation, to show forth types and prophecies which would be singularly emptied of their meaning but for the existence of these two great Sacraments. Not to dwell upon *that*, however, consider, my brethren, the peculiar force and prominence which is given by our Lord Himself to these two. He insists upon, submitting Himself to the

baptism of John, and so connecting by His own act in His sacred Person the old dispensation with the new. He foretells in His conversation with Nicodemus the character and necessity of Christian Baptism. Here He emphasizes the fact that there is no other possible way of *entering into* His Church. At once, when we come to think, we see—if we may reverently say so—the reasonableness of such teaching. As no one can be born into the human family except in accordance with the natural laws ordained by God, by which natural life is transmitted; so can no one be born into the family of the Redeemer except in submission to the supernatural law of regeneration appointed by Him, by which the soul receives a germ of His supernatural life. And then, after having foretold the coming Sacrament of Baptism, we find that our Lord *instituted* the same by distinct command to His Apostles before He left them.

In the same way with regard to the Sacrament of his Body and Blood, there is first that marvellous discourse in the synagogue of Capernaum recorded by S. John, with its emphatic assertion and reassertion—in the face of the unbelief and scorn of enemies, and the wondering fear and doubtfulness of disciples—of His intended gift to humanity of His own body and blood. And then, just towards the close of his earthly life, He *instituted* it with awful solemnity and dignity before His Apostles on the night of His Passion.

It is a striking fact, and much to be noticed, that from the earliest days to our own times, amidst all the vicissitudes in the life of the Church, in times of coldness as well as in times of faith, amongst those who have surrounded the Sacraments with adjuncts worthy of their dignity, as well as amongst those who have been careless or slovenly in

their administration—still, throughout the Church everywhere these two great Sacraments have ever been administered with the same *matter* and the same *form* as Christ appointed. Nay, more, that amongst many of those bodies who have unfortunately separated themselves from the outward organization of the Catholic Church, there has been preserved, at least, some semblance of these two great Sacraments. What a wonderful spectacle! What rites in the history of the family of man can compete with these in the majesty of mystery and unbroken tradition?

Of course, it is sad to remember that men, and devout men too, who have had a real love for our Redeemer, have closed their eyes to all this. However, we must not forget that they have only denied the sacramental system of the Church by emptying our Lord's words of all reasonable meaning. If it were possible to imagine that when our Lord spoke, as He did speak, of baptism—where it may be had—as a necessity to salvation, He in reality meant that it was only a figurative and more or less decorative symbol; if, when our Lord spoke of eating His Flesh and drinking His Blood, He in reality meant thinking about Him or believing in the Gospel; then we can surely say in sober earnestness that He went out of His way to use misleading language, and language which, in fact, has—on this supposition—misled His Church from the first until now. This is, of course, inadmissible. The sacramental system is a part of the Gospel of Christ, is a part of the faith “once for all delivered to the saints,” and for which “we must earnestly contend.”

V.

But there is a further consideration which illustrates this truth. We are taught in Holy Scripture that the Church of the older dispensation was a Church of type, of preparation, of promise. S. Paul does not hesitate to speak of all that the Jewish Church could give as "beggary elements;" that is, merely external forms or semblances having no intrinsic power. It was a Church of shadows, so we are taught; it led men to look towards a better country, though they could not hope themselves to enter there. If, indeed, the Christian Sacraments are only what they are sometimes represented to be by those who sit lightly by the Faith of the Church—if they are only symbols and figures; if Baptism only represents symbolically the necessity of goodness; if the bread and wine in the Holy Supper are only meant to remind that Christ died; then we might fairly say that, instead of having passed from a Church of shadows into a Church of substance, we have, in fact, passed into a Church where there are only the thinnest shadows of a dream. Indeed, certainly, with regard to the supposed object of the bread and wine in the Holy Communion, we might fairly say that if their only purpose was what has been represented in such theories, then that purpose would be much better served by a crucifix or a picture. "We are come to Mount Zion," we have no longer "beggary elements;" the Catholic Church has made a great advance upon the narrower Church of the old dispensation. Our "outward signs" are quickened, ennobled, and glorified by the presence of those splendid realities to which they call the attention of the faithful heart, and of which they are the channels. In the older

dispensation there were shadows of a Christ Who was *coming*; we possess "the very embodiment of His presence, the organs of His glory, the earthly vestments of His Sacred Person."

VI.

There can be little doubt that much of the misunderstanding with regard to the sacramental system of the Church has arisen from the fact that devout minds have feared that to this was attached the idea of what may be called a *mechanical* method of salvation. This is, of course, untrue. We cannot be saved by *mechanism*, however Divine; we cannot be purified and exalted *ex opere operato*. It is quite probable that Sacraments, like everything else that is good—like the pulpit, like the Bible—have been misused or abused by sinful men. The ministration of absolution, or of the Body and Blood of the Lord, may have been to some a "ministration" of death unto death, but *usum non tollit abusus*; no amount of abuse can take away our responsibility for a proper use. The efficient force of Sacraments, indeed, does not depend, as the Church teaches, on the goodness of those who administer them or the holiness of those who receive; that efficient force depends upon God's Word, His "Yea and Amen," depends upon the unchangeable promise and command of Christ; but the *results* and consequences to any given soul must, of course, depend upon the dispositions with which Sacraments are received. In the case of Holy Baptism, administered to infants who have not reached years of responsibility, the gift is a gift of free grace, and the soul puts no obstacle in the way of the full effect of the Sacrament. In the case of

the reception of all other Sacraments, the fulness of blessing received depends upon the degree of truth of heart and faith and repentance in those who receive. The *power*, in fact, as the Church teaches, is in God's gift, and right dispositions in those who receive remove the obstacles which might otherwise hinder the effects of grace.

It is a striking truth also, and quite consistent with the humiliation of the incarnation of the Eternal Word, that such simple forms should have been chosen to convey such majestic gifts. If we close our eyes to the truth of the Sacraments, the principle of the Incarnation is lost sight of immediately; if we open our eyes to this truth, we see at once how through the whole history of the Church that principle is carried on. He came amongst us as a helpless Infant. The majesty of His Godhead was concealed in the form of a little child, in the swaddling-clothes, in the manger; and He continues amongst us, giving His incarnate life to transform the fallen life of His people under the simplest and humblest forms. What is commoner than water, what simpler than bread and wine; the laying on of hands; a few spoken words, and so on? But what more majestic, what more entirely needed by the tottering pilgrim in the journey of life, than the gift or revival of the all-powerful life of his Redeemer conveyed to him under such forms as these?

VII.

There is, indeed—we must not forget it—a variation of importance in the Sacraments which are used by the Church. Two are of the highest value; one is of pre-eminent importance. Unspeakable is the value of Baptism,

because without it we are not in the Catholic Church, and no other Sacrament can be effectively received by us. Pre-eminent is the dignity of the Eucharist. Of this let us think when we speak of the sacramental life. It contains Christ in the value and virtue of His atoning Passion, of His Resurrection and Ascension. It has two chief uses which should never be forgotten by the Christian.

(1) It is "for the continual remembrance;" that is, the continual memorial, the continual showing forth before God Almighty of "the Sacrifice of the death of Christ and of the benefits which we receive thereby." In type and prophecy it was foretold in the older dispensation; four times in the New Testament is the account of its institution recorded, and one of these records is given by S. Paul, who had himself received this revelation in all its details—so important was the Eucharist—from the risen and ascended Lord Himself. He was not in the supper-room on the night of the Institution, but he knows every detail. "I have delivered unto you"—such are his words—"that which I also received," and then he goes on to enumerate the details of the Institution. We know from S. Paul's own testimony that the Gospel which he had preached was neither from man nor by man, not even from the "chiefest Apostle," but by revelation from Jesus Christ Himself; and we learn from this, if we had no other way to learn, the enormous importance attached by our Lord Himself to the right celebration of the Eucharist. In all the records we have the careful statement of the sacrificial acts—the taking, breaking (in the case of the bread), blessing, receiving (or giving), and the "doing in remembrance," or offering as memorial. Once, and only once, and once for all, was the "great sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole

world" made with the rending of the sacred Body and the shedding of the precious Blood upon the cross, but that one Offering for sin, made once and for ever, is represented again and again on the thousand altars of the Church, to "show" before God "the Lord's death till He come." To join the priest in doing this is to be present at the Church's great Prayer-meeting, and all who are baptized and who are not demoniacs, or who are not excommunicate, have a right and duty to be there. Earnestly should we teach our children this great privilege and duty; earnestly should the Christian Church insist to *all* her people on the loss they suffer, and the ingratitude of which they are guilty, in not being present at the Eucharistic Sacrifice. The nearer we draw to the Lord Jesus, the more shall we long to draw nearer, and the more Christians learn young to value, and take their proper share in, the sacrifice of the Eucharist, the more they will long for the strength of confirmation and the great privilege of receiving communion in the Body and Blood of Christ.

(2) And then there is that other use which is the privilege of the soul confirmed in the Church—the communion of the Body and Blood. Once the appointed symbols of bread and wine have been consecrated by a properly ordained priest, using the words appointed by our Lord Himself, we know that, "under the form of bread and wine," there is the Real Presence of our Lord. His delight is to be with the sons of men. He comes to unite Himself with us, not merely as a spirit, but with the whole of His nature, affecting the whole of ours. He permits us, if we will, so to eat His Flesh and drink His Blood that "our sinful bodies may be cleansed by His Body, and our souls washed through His precious Blood, and that we may ever-

more dwell in Him and He in us." What a wonderful and blessed gift! How needed by pilgrim-man for "strengthening and refreshing" in the toils of his pilgrimage! how needed by him for supporting the soul when, wrenched away from the body, it has to traverse the valley of the shadow! Yes, and what wonderful effects it must have through the soul upon the body, since with the reception of this sacred Food our Lord Himself distinctly connects some special prerogative of resurrection! Ah! when we contemplate the sacramental life, everything is at once simplicity and mystery; everything is in accordance with what is revealed of the needs of our nature and the redemptive power of Jesus Christ.

VIII.

There are certain practical thoughts which may help us, dear friends, from such truths as these.

(1) We are reminded of the sacredness of the life of the Christian. Just in proportion as he corresponds by faith and hope and love to the gifts that his Master offers him, in that proportion is his life instinct—soul and body—with the life of Jesus Christ. Here is a reason why we venerate good people, why we listen with respect to holy teachers, why we love and reverence the saints. Here is a motive for self-respect, a motive which parents and teachers should never lose sight of in the training of their children. Here is a real bond of Christian love and Christian fellowship. We are real members of that one Body in the fullest sense, because we have partaken of "that one Bread." Here is a stimulus to a true missionary spirit. We are not only to "love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous," but we are also

to mourn if others—often through no fault of their own—are without the strength and blessings which we abundantly enjoy, and we are to try, not with controversial rancour or argumentative bitterness, but in gentleness, tenderness, and wisdom to help them to see the beauty of the Sacramental Life.

(2) And here is a constant witness to us of the unspeakable love of Jesus Christ. Love, we know, is the strongest force in this sad world. It is that remarkable power of which it has been truly said, that the more we give of it, the more we have to give. It is the very texture of the innermost life of God; it expresses itself in giving itself; it expresses itself in sacrifice. However much He may be forgotten, however much He may be rejected, our Lord is constantly not only moving and touching souls by *actual* graces, but offering Himself, under simple yet mysterious symbols which cannot but arrest the attention, to be a power of *sanctifying* grace to all who will receive Him. His—so the Church is always witnessing—is an unforgetting love.

(3) And are we not reminded that, if we will only open our eyes to see and our ears to hear, *all* life is sacramental? “Outward signs” there are everywhere of inward gifts; the wonderful beauties of the natural world, the fascinating creations of religious art, the writings of reverent thinkers, the songs of sweet singers, the fair faces of little children—nay, the changes of circumstances, the trials and the joys of life; the delight of meetings, the sadness of partings, the very memories of those who are gone;—are not these but outward signs of the deep things conveyed through them to the immortal spirit of man, raising him above himself to a higher world, wakening him up to the majestic power of

noble thoughts, stimulating him to more quiet, self-restrained, and faithful effort, and teaching him that in this journey of life the real use of all things which seem to bless, and all things which seem to try, is to train him to the height of his destiny ; that in him, through Jesus Christ, " God may be all in all " ?

THE LIFE OF JOY.

SERMON XI.

THE LIFE OF JOY.

“Thou shalt show me the path of life; in Thy presence is the fulness of joy, and at Thy right hand there is pleasure for evermore.”—
Ps. xvi. 12 (P.B.V.).

THE author of the sixteenth psalm has before his mind the difficulties and perplexities of the journey of life. How many mistakes may be made, what wrong turnings may be taken, what misleading tracks may be followed, of this he is well aware. There is much in the thought of this to darken and to discourage, and it is possible to view the effort of a journey under such conditions as an effort implying downheartedness and distress. The Psalmist, however, takes another view: he is confident that it is possible to have beside him a Guide Who, if only he refers to Him, will not allow him to go far wrong. He is quite certain of a living Presence which prevents his feeling lonely in the journey before him, by reference to which he is enabled to find his way; nay, more, which changes the whole temper and tone of his mind, the moral atmosphere which he breathes in his pilgrimage, from perplexity and distress to joy. “Thou wilt show me the path of life, fulness of joy in Thy presence.”

I.

This kind of outburst of rapturous faith is characteristic of the Psalms. That remarkable book has succeeded in asserting itself throughout Jewish and Christian history, at once as the private prayer-book and public office-book of Jews and Christians, of the Jewish Church and the Christian Church alike. Nor is this wonderful, because of what may be called its all-embracing character. It is worth while to pause for a moment to think of this. No book in the world deals with God in such a free, spontaneous, open, buoyant manner as this. It sees Him everywhere in the works of His hands; it expresses feelings of wonder and awe and fear in view of His power, His immensity, and majesty. It sees Him also in the moral government of the world. It recognizes always His justice, His mercy, His truth, and expresses an unfailing and awe-stricken admiration of His necessary moral character. It sees Him in the minutest details of life, physical and spiritual, as well as in the broad expressions of His sovereignty—riding the whirlwind and governing the nations. It takes an equally all-embracing view of man. This is the more remarkable because it comes from writers who belong to a nation of the narrowest national prejudices. Whatever exclusiveness of thought might be indulged in by the Jews, the Psalmists seem to ascend the mountain, and to take in at a glance something far beyond the mere ring-fence of their own little nation, viz. "the heathen," the nations of the world. It does more than this: it plunges into human nature itself; it is at home with every form of emotion and affection which thrills along the nerves

and moves the heart of man. It seems at times to anticipate the later meditations and discoveries of psychological science, and to thread its course through the darkest passages of our human nature. It is sometimes severe, stern, almost fierce; it is sometimes tender, pathetic, melancholy, appealing; its gaze falls upon the brightest joys, upon the most commonplace satisfactions, on the deepest sorrows, on the moving vicissitudes of this mortal life; like a great book of real poetry, it expresses the heart's yearnings and interprets man to himself. It sinks down into the lowest, saddest, most minor music; it runs along the level of common harmonies; it rises up to the expression of the most exalted triumph. It deals with God, it deals with man.

But more than that: this collection of poetry is strictly and universally *religious*. That unspeakable tie between God and man, to ignore which is to ignore the deepest thing in life, is never forgotten in the Psalms. One and all, the poets of this collection agree in this: they cannot conceive there being any sense in human nature, in human life, unless in its relation to God. The vagaries and follies of the modern mind, according to which little bits of the earth, or little atoms of the heavens, may be studied without a thought of the First Cause, according to which the vast *cosmos* of universe, or the still vaster *cosmos* of the modern world can be studied as if they were the product of a blind chance, could never occur to their minds. They have exercised their extraordinary hold upon the intelligent world of Eastern and Western religion, partly from the absence of this one-sidedness. But more: they exhibit all the affections and emotions of that human soul, of whose sorrows, trials, troubles, triumphs, they are so full, as find-

ing their real expression and their fullest exercise by contact with the Divine life. In the Psalms we have human nature, suffering from the ordinary troubles and vicissitudes to which man's life is ever subject and ever will be, yet finding its rebukes and warnings, its teachings and helps, its deepest happiness and most exalted joys, by the close contact of the human spirit with that living Spirit from which it comes.

We do not wonder at this so much in great Apostles who listened to the word and sat at the feet of Christ, but we are startled to find some of the really deepest thoughts of those Apostles anticipated in the Psalms. To a Christian, indeed, this is one of those many proofs of that special and mysterious Divine illumination which we call *inspiration* in Scripture; but no thoughtful man can fail to be struck with this marvellous fact, as being one proof the more that man *has* faculties by which he can know God. "Is there in human nature," says a thoughtful teacher, "such a faculty, separate from the faculties by which we judge of the things of sense and the abstractions of the pure intellect, but yet a true and trustworthy faculty for knowing God—for knowing God in some such way as we know the spirits and souls, half disclosed, half concealed under the mark and garment of the flesh, among whom we have been brought up, among whom we live? Can we know Him in such a true sense as we know those whom we love and those whom we dislike; those whom we venerate and trust, and those whom we fear and shrink from? The course of the world, its history, its literature, our everyday life, presuppose such knowledge of men and character; they confirm its existence and general trustworthiness by the infinitely varied and continuous evidence of results. The question whether

there is such a faculty in the human soul for knowing its Maker and God ; knowing Him, though behind the veil ; knowing Him, though flesh and blood can never see Him ; knowing Him, though the questioning intellect loses itself in the thought of Him ;—this question finds here its answer. In the Psalms is the evidence of that faculty, and that with it man has not worked in vain. . . . The answer whether God has given to man the faculty to know Him might be sought in vain ‘elsewhere ;’ it is found in the Book of Psalms.”¹

I have dwelt upon this at length, dear friends, because, the moment we think of it, such words as those of the text gain force and emphasis. They come into focus, so to speak. We are reminded that they are not an expression of passing poetical enthusiasm ; that they are not of one time, or one set of circumstances, or one view of religion. They are doubtless the outcome of a very really religious soul ; they express the feeling and conviction of sincere personal piety ; but they teach a truth and record an experience which it is important for us all to learn, and which, if we will, we may all unquestionably share. It does not matter very much in this connection as to when was the date and who was the writer of the psalm. Some such questions have, of course, been fixed with fairly ascertainable accuracy ; as to others, the one thing on which the critics seem to be agreed is that they disagree. Such questions are interesting, and have an importance of their own ; but we are engaged in a question lying deeper than all these, and with a significance of infinitely higher value. The voice that speaks here, no matter whose voice it was, is the voice of an interpreter of human nature, and of one who

¹ Dean Church.

knew God. Here is one separated from us by chasms of centuries, who feels as strongly as we feel, in our more thoughtful moments, that life is a journey; that we can never be standing still; that we have a path to tread, mental, moral spiritual; above all, that character is steadily advancing towards its final condition of fixity; that there is much in such thoughts to scare and startle; that there are many mistakes that possibly may be made; that to guide life aright, requires thoughtfulness and care. But beyond all these convictions which we can so readily endorse, there is something more, with which perhaps we are not so well acquainted, which we do well to think of, and which we may take pains to learn, viz. that God is very near to each of us, ready to "show us the path of life," and that that journey of life, of which we are apt, not unnaturally, to think as surrounded with difficulties and overclouded with darkness, may be an opportunity for "joy."

II.

Partly perhaps from that national characteristic which makes us a grave people; partly perhaps from the fear of unreality, of allowing ourselves to express more than we actually feel; partly perhaps from the streak of Puritanism which has been left across English religion, even among those who have been brought up in the teaching of our part of the Catholic Church, there seems to be a hesitation among us to allow ourselves to enter into the brighter and more joyous sides of Christianity.

It is quite true—it never can be forgotten—that Christianity is the religion of sorrow. It is that, indeed,

which makes it so suitable to the needs of human nature, situated as we are. In a fallen race there must be a considerable predominance of sorrow, and, looking around us on the world in which we live, it is impossible to deny that we are constantly confronted with the mystery of tears. And yet it is certainly true that everything is not lost by becoming a Christian. If we really believe the Christian Faith ; if we really turn our hearts to God ; if we really seek Him, and throw ourselves upon Him, and trust His promises, and feel His Fatherhood, and fly back to Him when we are going wrong, and carry our sins to Him, in union with the perfect atonement of His dear Son, and try again when we have failed in any measure, not relying upon ourselves, but resting in Him ; if we are in earnest in looking to Him, as His Apostles were in earnest ; if we earnestly believe as they believed that "*every* good gift and *every* perfect gift cometh from the Father of lights ;" if we allow ourselves to be certain, because He has revealed it to us, that there is a future of glory and of righteousness meant for ourselves ; if we will only grasp the fact that we may "cast *all* our care upon Him, for He careth for us ;" if we are practically certain of the enormous blessings and privileges which are secured to us by being members of the Catholic Church ; if we allow ourselves to rest with a deep and solid conviction upon the real truth that "the Lord reigneth, be the people never so impatient : he sitteth between the cherubim, be the earth never so unquiet ;" if we have the confidence of trust, that though "His way is in the sea, and His path in the great waters, and His footsteps are not known," still "the Judge of all the earth shall do right ;" if we are sure that just as the Bible, just as the Church, just as the life on earth of His Eternal Son, are

revelations of the will of the Father, so also there is a clear revelation of that will in the providential ordering of the world's history—yes, and in the detailed ordering of the events of our own lives ; if, in consequence, we are learning each of us more and more to be

“ One who never turned his back, but marched breast forward ;
Never doubted clouds would break ;
Never dreamed, tho' right were worsted, wrong would triumph ;
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake ; ”—

if, I ask, this, or anything like this, be the way in which we look at life ; if, that is to say, our religion have some backbone in it, and some practical power ; if we do not fool ourselves with phrases, or merely dream amidst great realities, or tie our thoughts down to the merely immediate, or refuse to listen to the voices which speak to us of better things ;—if, I ask again, our religion be in any sense a practical power in the lives we are living, what is to prevent us not only hoping that we are more than ever learning in the school of goodness, not only being humbly confident that there are given to us more and more supplies of strength, but also, deep down in our souls, and notwithstanding the real trials and the real difficulties which it would be false to deny, having a fund of that buoyant and hopeful happiness for which we can find no name but “ joy ” ?

We may hesitate, indeed, to think of ourselves alongside the experiences of great saints and great apostles ; yet, at least, in this they must be our examples. Take S. Paul, for example. Was there ever a life more filled with everything that would try human nature ? All the hopes, all the ambitions, which he might justly have cherished were

deliberately laid down at the feet of Christ. Externally, there was the severity of constant labour; internally, there was unceasing trouble to a highly sensitive and affectionate heart. A life was spent in what men would call failure, and under the constant strain of severest suffering and anxiety, and it was closed with a cruel death; and yet from first to last we are sensible of that deep undercurrent of buoyant happiness which finds its expression in his own exhortation, "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice." Think of S. Augustine—of that life of mistake, and bewilderment, and anxiety, and wandering, and then at last of self-surrender to the will and the revelation of God; and then remember with what a clear view of thankfulness the whole past course is surveyed, with what a joyous resolution the difficulties of the Church and time are faced, and how even at the last—with the very Vandals at the gates—the soul is rapt away in trust and love and joy towards God. Think of S. Chrysostom. Think of his commanding position, swaying the minds of the populace and fighting the battles of the Church. From a place of publicity, of popularity, of dignity, he finds himself removed to the desolateness of unbefriended exile, shut out from the civilization and movements of the time, and condemned to the lot of an outcast on the dreary, pitiless shores of the inhospitable Euxine. It scarcely seems to matter to him. The outward circumstance of life appears a trifling accident, apparently, to the saintly soul. Even-minded, generous, cheerful, light-hearted, and calm, he only sees in the "changes and chances of this mortal life" the guidance of One who "shows" him "the path of life," and there is no stinting in the buoyancy of his joy. Think even higher. Think of Jesus Christ. Here, at any rate, we have the

example of "the Man of sorrows ;" and yet Holy Scripture is emphatic upon the fact "recorded for our learning," that it was "for the *joy* set before Him" that He "endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down on the right hand of the Majesty of God."

Brethren, these are unquestionably very high examples. Doubtless our condition is very different. Doubtless our attainments, when brought into such comparison, are pitifully small; but none the less it is true that these are examples, and that we are intended to follow them. The same principles followed, the same commands obeyed, the same course of action pursued by them, will in us produce like results. Our life's journey, if we will, may be a path where God will be our Guide; and in whatever perplexities, His presence may be to us what it is to all who seek Him, or what it may be—a real source of spiritual joy.

III.

It is difficult to analyze any single emotion of anything so mysterious and complicated as the human soul. Our various feelings and affections blend one with the other like the gradations of colour in the rainbow, so that it is hard to say where one ends and another begins. And yet we quite understand that there is a very real difference between happiness and joy. Happiness lies at the root of joy, as the plant supports the soft colouring of the flower, as the deep mass of the waters of the ocean are presupposed when we speak of the glittering showers of foam. In joy there is something akin to the evanescent brightness of the dawn, to the swiftly passing ecstasy of

triumphant music, to the startling and moving rhythm of glorious poetry. It is in its nature akin to youth and purity, and unsullied affection and undarkened hope. It is buoyant and elastic, and filled with irrepressible life. It implies happiness, but it means happiness in full play upon the objects which call it forth, and without any restraint, without anything to hold it from its direct and natural expression. It is the soul in elastic spring and regulated but unrestrained emotion, and expressing itself in the brightness of sunlight and the fulness of life, when the object which awakens it is unquestionably worthy. It sweeps—this emotion—through the whole of our being; there is no chord that does not vibrate to its touch. It has about it the melody of purest music, the perfume of wakening flowers, the sweetness of youth, the brightness of the morning. It is not in its reality unless it is pure and perfect, and sets the whole being tingling with untroubled melody, with the trembling of light that knows no streak of approaching gloom. Who does not know in natural things the witness to sweetness and purity and innocence which comes to every soul from laughter of untroubled joy? Who does not remember some time in the course of a mortal pilgrimage when, at least for the moment, or for a few passing hours, life seemed so transfigured, seemed so entirely to taste some pure drops from eternity that then at any rate we had a glimpse of the meaning of real joy?

But, to analyze more closely,—this emotion has certainly some root in that which touches the *mind*. The human mind is so constituted that it finds its happiness from being illuminated by truth. To go out on the great sea of truth,

especially truth of the highest kind, is for the mind to be in contact with eternal realities. It is not given to us, amidst the limitations of sense and time, always to realize these in their fulness—nay, I may say, in their *fulness* is it often given?—but there are moments in the lives of all of us, and they are very precious moments indeed, when some truth of the highest import is borne in upon the mind. Like “the trembling of the sea,” as Dante describes it, under the breaking of the dawn, the human mind is conscious of a new truth, or of an old truth now fully realized, and when so conscious it trembles and vibrates with an intense intellectual emotion. We cannot doubt that this emotion is raised, as mathematicians would say, to the highest power, when the truth is of such a nature as to illuminate God’s life and our own, and when our whole mental structure trembles at the contact, trembles with a delight that can no way be expressed except by the one word—joy. There is then an enlargement of the mind; there are new and wider views; there is a vision stretching to almost infinite horizons; there is a treasure grasped and assimilated and made our own—“a thing of beauty” that is “a joy for ever.” All real truth of whatever character,—but, above all, if it is of the highest,—when it touches the deepest springs of our intellectual faculties, unquestionably brings us joy.

Need I say this is equally true—nay, if possible, more true—when what is really good and beautiful touches the realms of our affections? For our affectionate nature not only contemplates, as does the mind; it *grasps*. We are so endowed that we have the capacity to make part of ourselves, and part of ourselves in the purest way, that which moves our

higher affections. If the vision of a perfect beauty is permitted to come before us with great reality, it has this power—it expands and purifies. We have instances of this placed before us in Holy Scripture. S. Matthew at the receipt of custom had his affections enlisted by the powers of a lower self-satisfaction. The vision of the Christ in His entire self-surrender, in the lofty nobility of His elevation of character, in His complete disinterestedness, in His self-abnegation for the sake of others, flashed upon the self-seeking publican. That beautiful vision thrilled him not only through the mind but to the heart, and it changed his life. The self-seeker was henceforth the slave of self-denial; the Roman publican became an apostle of Christ. “For the joy that was set before him,” he, like his Master, was *glad* to “endure his cross, despising the shame.”

It was the same with the Magdalene. There had been a kind of joy of a lower kind in the life which once had been hers. Doubtless that lower joy, like all lower forms of such an emotion, had brought its reaction of bitterness; then there came the vision of real holiness, of the beauty of goodness, of the glory of self-denial, and all was changed. The thrill of a lower emotion appeared like the mere whispers of debased and vulgar music compared with the pure harmonies, with the perfect melodies, of a higher life. The complex motives were simplified into the one motive of entire self-surrender to what was altogether good and beautiful, and the joy of self-oblation face to face with the highest beauty became the very spring of a real and lasting penitence.

It was so with S. Peter. Many a vision had he had, imperfect and passing, of the goodness and greatness of his

Master. Clouds of worldliness had darkened the vision, as they have so often darkened it to us all; then there came the moment when worldliness had done its work. There was the terrible act of that treacherous denial; then there was that glance of Christ—"He turned and *looked* upon Peter." We may be sure that, forgetting himself in the agony of bitter tears, his whole affectionate nature grasped the perfection of perfect goodness, and a joy rang through his heart, though that heart was wrung with a sense of base betrayal. Whatever happened to himself, he was lost in the ecstasy of delight at real goodness, face to face with his own misery, and Peter was saved.

It is so with us all—yes, with us all, by the mercy of God, if our deepest affections vibrate to real goodness. We lose ourselves in contempt and anger, it may be at miserable betrayals; but does it matter about ourselves when the heart has clung with self-suppressing love to what is really great and beautiful? We are moved—yes, in our sorrow we are moved—with the perfect unselfishness of joy.

There is another department of human nature where the same emotion is possible. Perhaps it is more selfish, but yet, as S. Augustine somewhere teaches, there is a selfishness that is most unselfish. We are conscious of that great guiding power—the power of will. The sadness of our humanity is never more sad than when we feel, not that our want is the want of vision, nor that our want is the want of affection, but that the real want is that slackness of will which hinders us from following out the vision and being loyal to our best affections. But if we begin to feel that the grace of God is not a *name* but a *thing*, and that it is possible by the force of will to realize the teaching of

the vision and to follow out in fact the force of the affection, then there comes the deepest and truest emotion of the creature—the emotion springing from the sense that we have not only seen and admired, that we have not only loved but embraced, but further that we *can* in life reproduce what we have seen and loved. This is the highest joy.

How intensely this joy had come home to the Apostle, when, with his shackled hands, and before the astonished tribunal and the astonished audience, he said with an accent of unmistakable certainty, "Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision"! It is possible to the Christian, dear friends, to know in *mind* the dignity of truth, to feel in the *affections* the beauty of truth, and further in *will* to realize the strength of support which makes all this no longer a mere vision, no longer a mere object of affections, but a real support to the tottering will; which makes that vision and that affection all its own for practical purposes; which makes a man sensible that he *can* surrender himself entirely to the voice of God, that he *can* turn full-faced with entire determination to the will of his Creator, that he can submit to that conversion and become "as a little child" in the hand of his Father, entering thus into the kingdom of heaven. This, this is real joy.

What are the joys which come from the beauty of the universe, from its breaking dawns, from its glorious sunsets, from its opening flowers; what are the delights of human genius, of literature, of poetry, of music; what are the satisfactions of human successes, of human ambitions achieved, of human affections satisfied, compared with the

eternal satisfaction of a mind that has seen everlasting truth, of a heart that has been touched by unchanging beauty, of a will that has been re-enforced by unflagging goodness, of a whole being that has been truly surrendered to God? The true blessedness of the creature is by union with the Creator, and amidst all the difficulties and perplexities of our journey of life, this, this is real joy.

IV.

We are taught by Holy Scripture, we are taught by the Church which interprets Scripture, that this does not depend upon mere fancy or feeling, but that this is the work of the Holy Ghost. There are certain forms of strength given to each of us in germ in Holy Baptism which are to be developed as life goes on by prayer, by experience, by loyalty to the graces which are offered to us from which this comes. Faith and Hope and Love are the three great forms of strength, or, as we call them, theological virtues, by which the soul is bound to God. Any one of these may suffer shipwreck through our own inconstancy or frailty in the journey of life.

The Catholic Faith, interpreting and illuminating Holy Scripture, reminds us that these virtues are surrounded, lest they should suffer that shipwreck, by gifts—given especially in the Sacrament of Confirmation—to support these virtues in the soul. They stand around them, like the armed figures at the imperial tomb at Innsbruck, to warn off intruders. Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Knowledge, protect Faith. Hope is guarded against the assaults of presumption or despondency by Holy Fear and

Ghostly Strength. And Love, the highest of all, is guarded and made practical by True Godliness. And if this protection has its perfect work, fruits of the Spirit come out in the soul towards God, towards man, towards ourselves. Towards God, "love, *joy*, peace;" towards man, "long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, trustiness, meekness;" towards ourselves, "self-restraint."

Perhaps, of all the theological virtues, there is none so much as *hope*, with its attendant gifts, which produces real spiritual joy. Hope is a moral energy; it is a power to which, if we respond, there is a real effort to withstand the assaults of despondency and downheartedness and despair. It is a moral discipline. It trains us by a vigorous energy to deal with the things which are *now*, as things which come from the providence of God. We learn by it not only to believe in God, but to grasp His promises as belonging to ourselves. By it we make, as it has been well said, "a counter appeal" to God's truth and goodness against all that seems to pull life down.¹ By it we withstand the really terrible temptations of imagination, which is the fatal home of all forms of fear. More: by it we deal not only with the present; we throw ourselves into the future. We live with that quiet certainty that for each one of us there is, if we will, a splendid destiny; that we can track our lives from the moment when we are living right away into the dimness and yet glory of a promised future, when we may be, if we will, sinless and useful, fully fulfilling the purposes of God. For this—let us remember it—we are born. For this Christ died. For this the Church exists. For this there is the enactment of sacraments and

¹ See Dean Church, *Advent Sermons*, "Hope."

prayer. For this are the trials and sorrows, the happiness and consolations, of our mortal life. By this we gain the habit of looking on. This reawakens and deepens our repentances ; this strengthens and reinvigorates our efforts ; this purifies, utilizes, and ennobles our affections ; this places things in their right proportion. By this we understand that there is neither great nor small ; that the one important thing—supremely important—is to do all things with a “purpose proportionate to our end.”

This gives to life in its common things a nobility of aim, in all things a disinterestedness of intention, in failure a recurrence to our Redeemer, in trial and labour an entire trust in God.

Why, then, why allow ourselves to look down? Truly we are motes in a sunbeam, truly we are flies on a cart-wheel ; truly we are like the drummer-boys in the battle, knowing nothing of *why* we are placed there, but having confidence in the Commander-in-chief.

Ah ! let us trust Him. Ah ! let us hope in Him Who is perfect Goodness, and let each of us fulfil our allotted task with a proud confidence that not for nothing has He set us to do it, and He knows better than we. And through the darkness there will come beams of the everlasting sunshine, and amidst all our failures we shall not be strangers to the emotion of spiritual joy.

“And the night shall be filled with music,
And the cares that infest the day
Shall fold their tents, like the Arabs
And as silently steal away.”

Life's journey, dear friends, to the Christian is not a journey without its toils and sorrows, its ups and downs, its beliefs and disbelievings ; but none the less to the honest

and true heart it is a journey which is not by any means, for the mind that opens to truth, for the heart that opens to eternal beauty, for the will that rests upon unfailing strength, unilluminated by real joy; for "the path of the just is as a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

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